BATMAN
Dark Legends

Before there was a Robin...

Before he had allies in high places...

Before the world knew him as Gotham's defender...

The night was his only companion.

These are four Legends of the Dark Knight.

MASK

ALL THE DARK KNIGHT BELIEVES IN IS PUT TO A STRANGE TEST.
Story and art by Bryan Talbot

IMAGES

BATMAN'S FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE JOKER.
Story by Dennis O'Neil.
Art by Bret Blevins

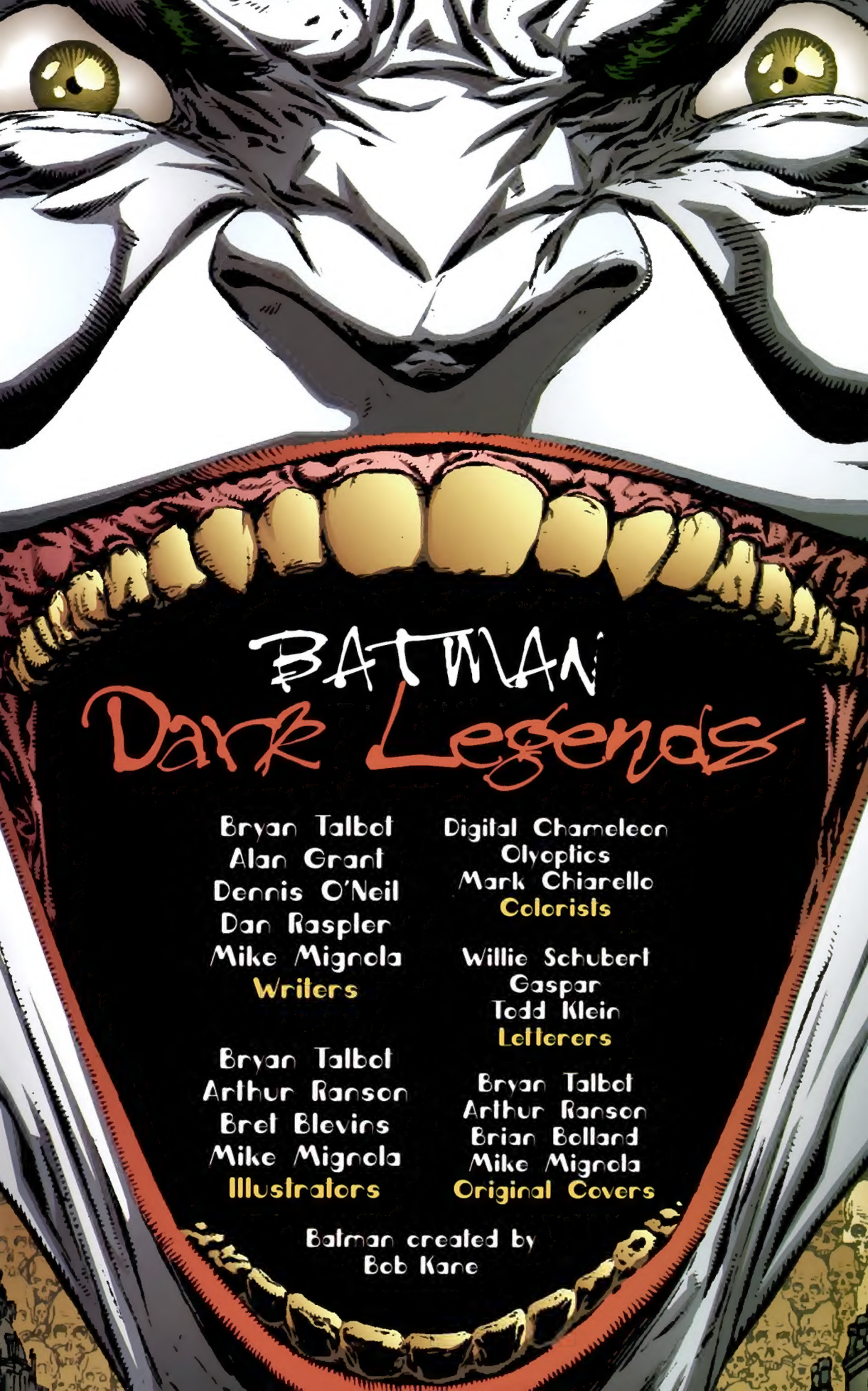
TAO

A STORY ABOUT BRUCE WAYNE'S EARLY TRAINING IN THE ORIENT.
Story by Alan Grant.
Art by Arthur Ranson

SANCTUM

A MACABRE TALE OF PRIMORDIAL EVIL IN MODERN GOTHAM CITY.
Story by Mike Mignola and Dan Raspler.
Script by Dan Raspler.
Art by Mike Mignola

BATMAN: DARK LEGENDS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BATMAN: DARK LEGENDS

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BATMAN
LEGENDS OF THE
DARK KNIGHT
NO 39 NOV 92
1.75 CAN 2.25
MASK
BRYAN TALBOT \ PART ONE
BRYAN TALBOT '92

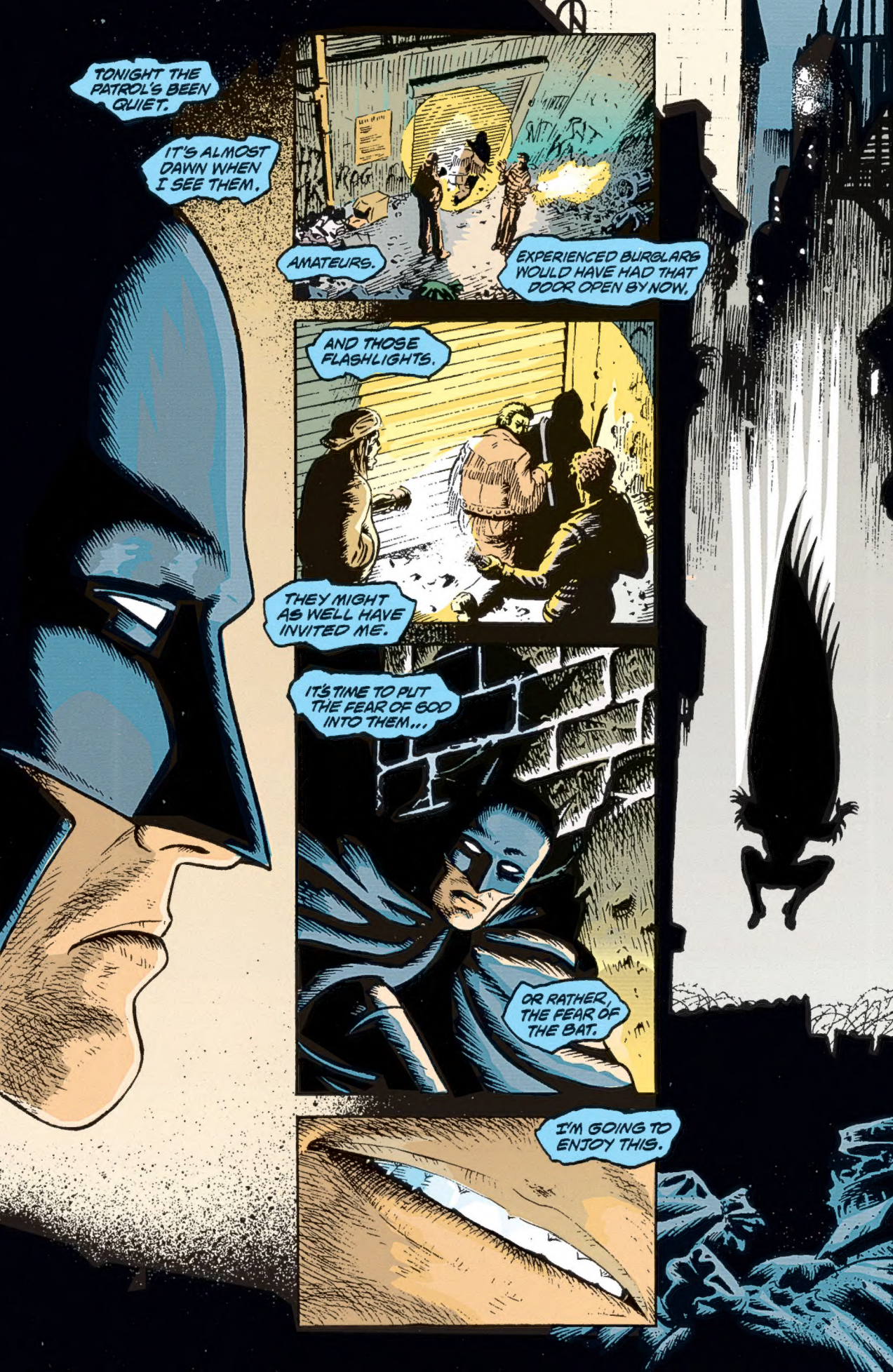
MASK

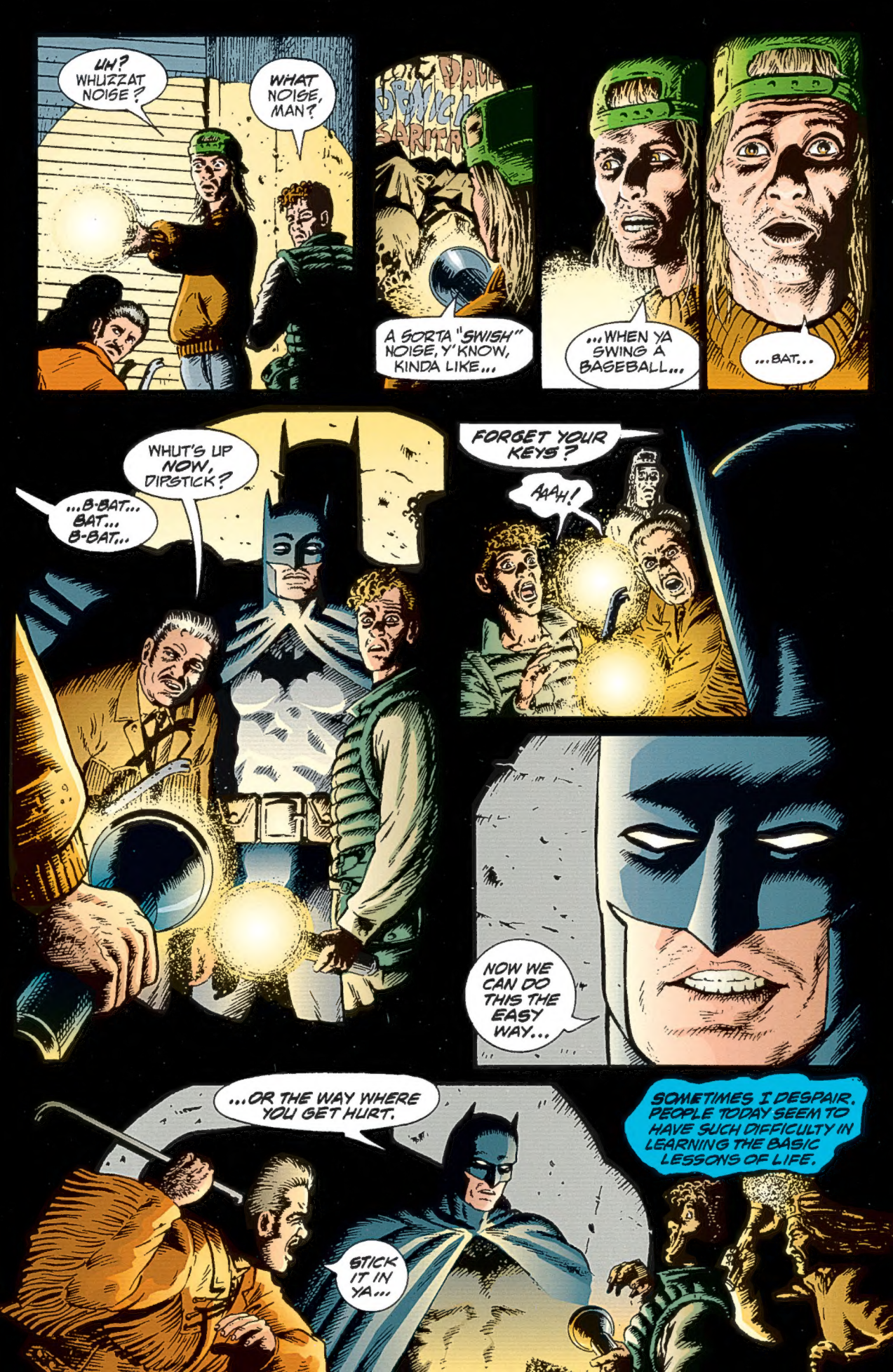
PART ONE by BRYAN TALBOT

GASPAR LETTERS || OLYOPTICS COLORS || GOODWIN & KAPLAN EDITORS

PSYCHIATRIC CONSULTANT: KEITH MARSLAND, R.G.N., R.M.N.

BATMAN CREATED BY BOB KANE


TONIGHT THE PATROL'S BEEN QUIET.
IT'S ALMOST DAWN WHEN I SEE THEM.
AMATEURS.
EXPERIENCED BURGLARS WOULD HAVE HAD THAT DOOR OPEN BY NOW.
AND THOSE FLASHLIGHTS.
THEY MIGHT AS WELL HAVE INVITED ME.
IT'S TIME TO PUT THE FEAR OF GOD INTO THEM...
OR RATHER, THE FEAR OF THE BAT.
I'M GOING TO ENJOY THIS.

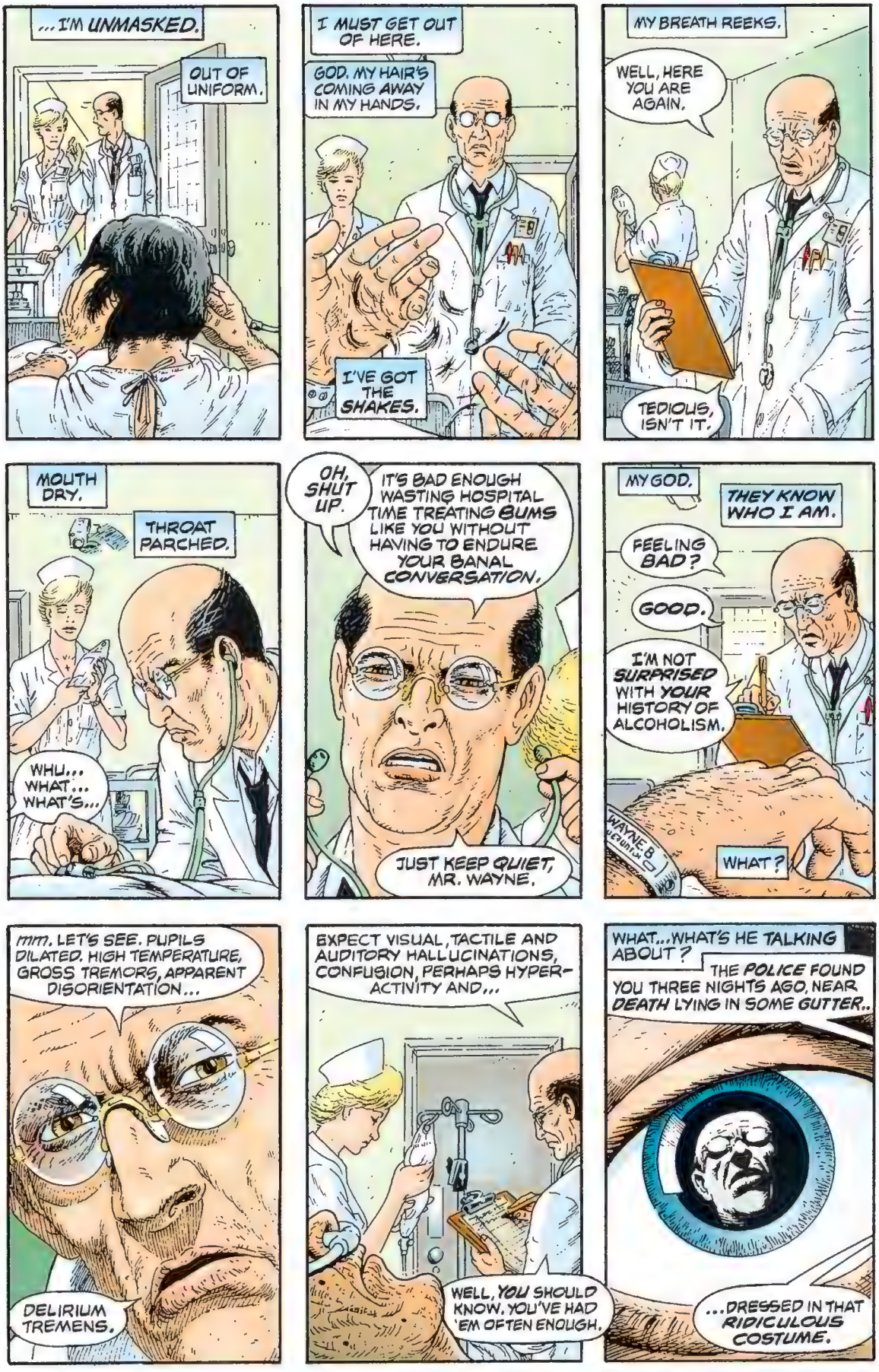

UH? WHUZZAT NOISE?
WHAT NOISE, MAN?
A SORTA "SWISH" NOISE, Y'KNOW, KINDA LIKE...
...WHEN YA SWING A BASEBALL...
...BAT...
WHUT'S UP NOW, DIPSTICK?
...B-BAT... BAT... B-BAT...
FORGET YOUR KEYS?
AAAH!
NOW WE CAN DO THIS THE EASY WAY...
...OR THE WAY WHERE YOU GET HURT.
STICK IT IN YA...
SOMETIMES I DESPAIR. PEOPLE TODAY SEEM TO HAVE SUCH DIFFICULTY IN LEARNING THE BASIC LESSONS OF LIFE.

NO PROBLEM.
CRAK
WHUD!
THERE GOES HIS NASAL CARTILAGE.
KLIK!
MY ARM BLOCK SHATTERS HIS ULNA.
I AM THE BATMAN. IN THE SHADOWS I MOVE LIKE A SHARK THROUGH WATER.
SWIFTLY.
EFFORTLESSLY.
IN COLD BLOOD.
SIDE THRUST KICK.
WITH SURGICAL PRECISION I STOP SHORT OF SNAPPING HIS SPINE.
THE MOST POWERFUL BLOW YOU CAN DELIVER.
BUT THERE'S NO NEED FOR EXCESSIVE VIOLENCE.
I'M NOT EVEN BREATHING HARD.
I'VE MADE MY POINT.
I COULD MAKE THIS LAST.
CRAAASH

THIS HAS JUST BEEN A P.R. EXERCISE.
PERHAPS THEY'LL THINK TWICE NEXT TIME.
AND ACCORDING TO MY CALCULATIONS...
...HERE COMES THEIR RIDE.
McBOOHAN'S BLACK AND WHITE, RIGHT ON SCHEDULE. END OF HIS GRAVEYARD SHIFT.
OKAY, BATS. GOT IT. EVIDENCE ROUND BACK OF THE STORE.
IT'S ONLY AN ATTEMPTED BREAK-IN BUT... BUT...
HEY
HEY
HEY
HEY
HEY
YOU ALRIGHT, BATS?
BATS
BATS
BATS
BATS
BATS
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
I...I'M FINE.
I'VE GOT TO GO.
NOW.
UH, OKAY BATS.
BE SEEIN' YA.
FEELING WEAK
NAUSEOUS
EVERYTHING'S SPINNING
MUSTN'T RUN
MUSTN'T LET THEM SEE ME LIKE...
I THINK I'M GOING TO BE...

WHUUUP
THE WORLD IS...TURNING...
BLACK
A BRIEF IMPRESSION... I'M ON A GURNEY... BEING WHEELED DOWN A CORRIDOR...
SKREE SKREE SKREE SKREE
THE WHEELS SOUND LIKE...
SKREE SKREE SKREE SKREE
SKREEEEEEEEEEE

I...CAN SMELL...
...DISINFECTANT
I HEAR TRAFFIC... MUTED...
FILTERING THROUGH...
...THE WINDOW
GOTHAM CITY CENTER
THIS IS GOTHAM CENTRAL HOSPITAL.
I HEAR THE BUSTLE OF THE HOSPITAL...
SEE THE MOVEMENT OF ORDERLIES... DOCTORS...
I FEEL SICK...
...FEEBLE...
...DROWSY
CAN'T THINK CLEARLY. LIKE WADING THROUGH SYRUP.
AH, YOU'RE AWAKE AT LAST.
GOOD MORNING.
AND A FINE MORNING IT IS.
IT'S GOING TO BE A BEAUTIFUL DAY, THAT'S FOR SURE.
I TRY TO SPEAK.
IT'S A MONUMENTAL EFFORT.
THE WORDS DON'T COME.
OH, DOCTOR EMERSON...
I SUDDENLY REALIZE...


...I'M UNMASKED.
OUT OF UNIFORM.
I MUST GET OUT OF HERE.
GOD. MY HAIR'S COMING AWAY IN MY HANDS.
I'VE GOT THE SHAKES.
MY BREATH REEKS.
WELL, HERE YOU ARE AGAIN.
TEDIOUS, ISN'T IT.
MOUTH DRY.
THROAT PARCHED.
WHU... WHAT... WHAT'S...
OH, SHUT UP.
IT'S BAD ENOUGH WASTING HOSPITAL TIME TREATING BUMS LIKE YOU WITHOUT HAVING TO ENDURE YOUR BANAL CONVERSATION.
JUST KEEP QUIET, MR. WAYNE.
MY GOD.
THEY KNOW WHO I AM.
FEELING BAD?
GOOD.
I'M NOT SURPRISED WITH YOUR HISTORY OF ALCOHOLISM.
WAYNE, B
WHAT?
mm. LET'S SEE. PUPILS DILATED. HIGH TEMPERATURE, GROSS TREMORS, APPARENT DISORIENTATION...
DELIRIUM TREMENS.
EXPECT VISUAL, TACTILE AND AUDITORY HALLUCINATIONS, CONFUSION, PERHAPS HYPER-ACTIVITY AND...
WELL, YOU SHOULD KNOW. YOU'VE HAD 'EM OFTEN ENOUGH.
WHAT...WHAT'S HE TALKING ABOUT?
THE POLICE FOUND YOU THREE NIGHTS AGO, NEAR DEATH LYING IN SOME GUTTER..
...DRESSED IN THAT RIDICULOUS COSTUME.

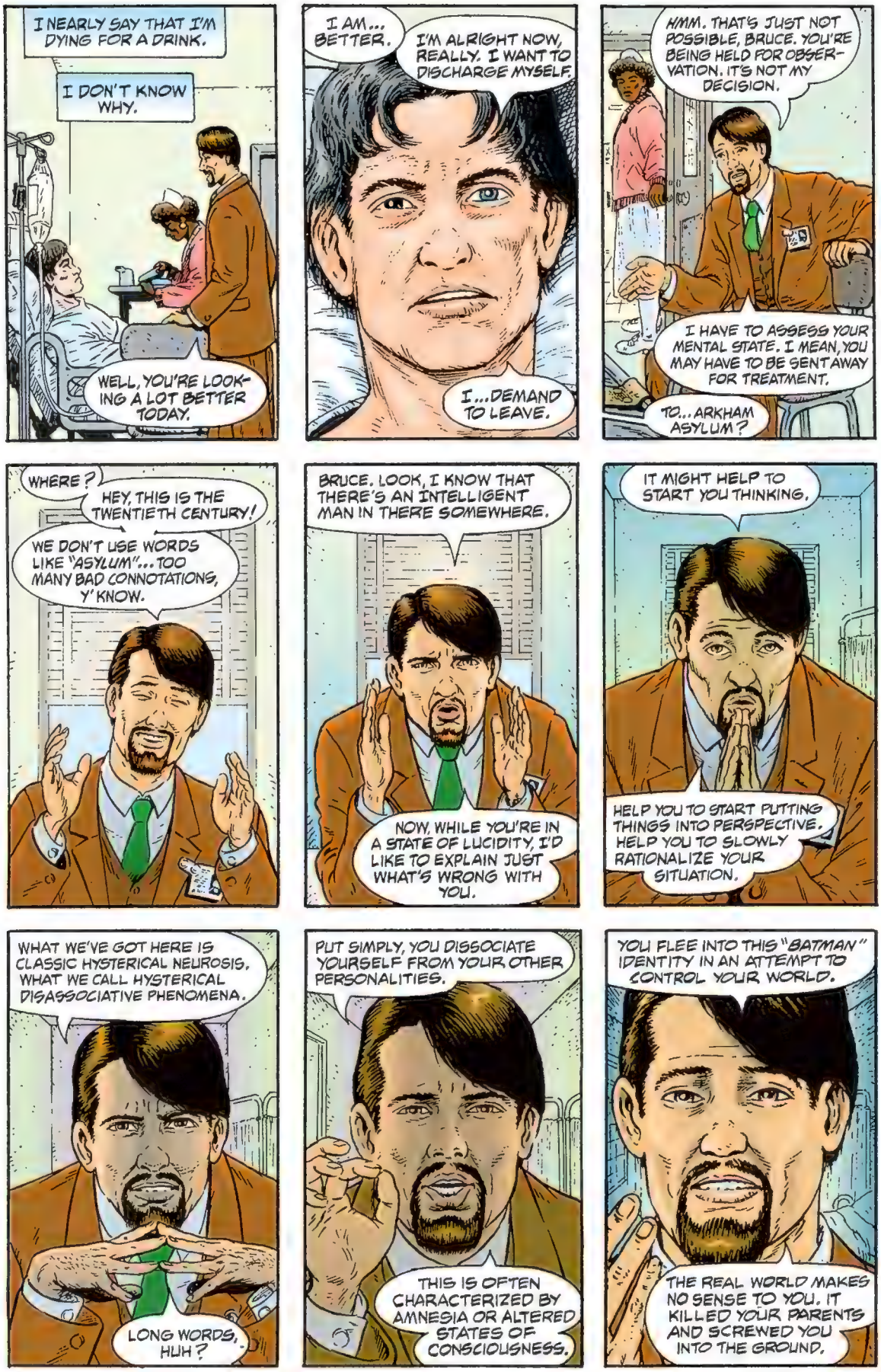
EXACTLY WHAT MAKES A DOWN-AND-OUT DIPSOMANIAC LIKE YOU IMAGINE THAT HE'S SOME KIND OF HERO FIGURE IS BEYOND MY ABILITY TO...
I'VE GOT TO GET OUT.
NOW.
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?
MR. WAYNE!
PAINFUL TO MOVE.
WEAK.
FOR GOD'S SAKE, MAN! YOU MUSTN'T MOVE! GET BACK IN BED!
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO MY MUSCLE TONE?
NURSE! THIOPENTONE SODIUM 150 M.G.S IV.
NO STRENGTH
STOMACH CRAMPS
I CAN BARELY STAND.
I MAKE IT TO THE DOOR.
A STRANGER STARES BACK AT ME.
A REFLECTION IN THE WIRED GLASS.
I'M AN EXPERT ON DISGUISE...MAKE-UP...
I'D SMELL IT. I'D FEEL IT.
THIS IS ME.
WHAT...

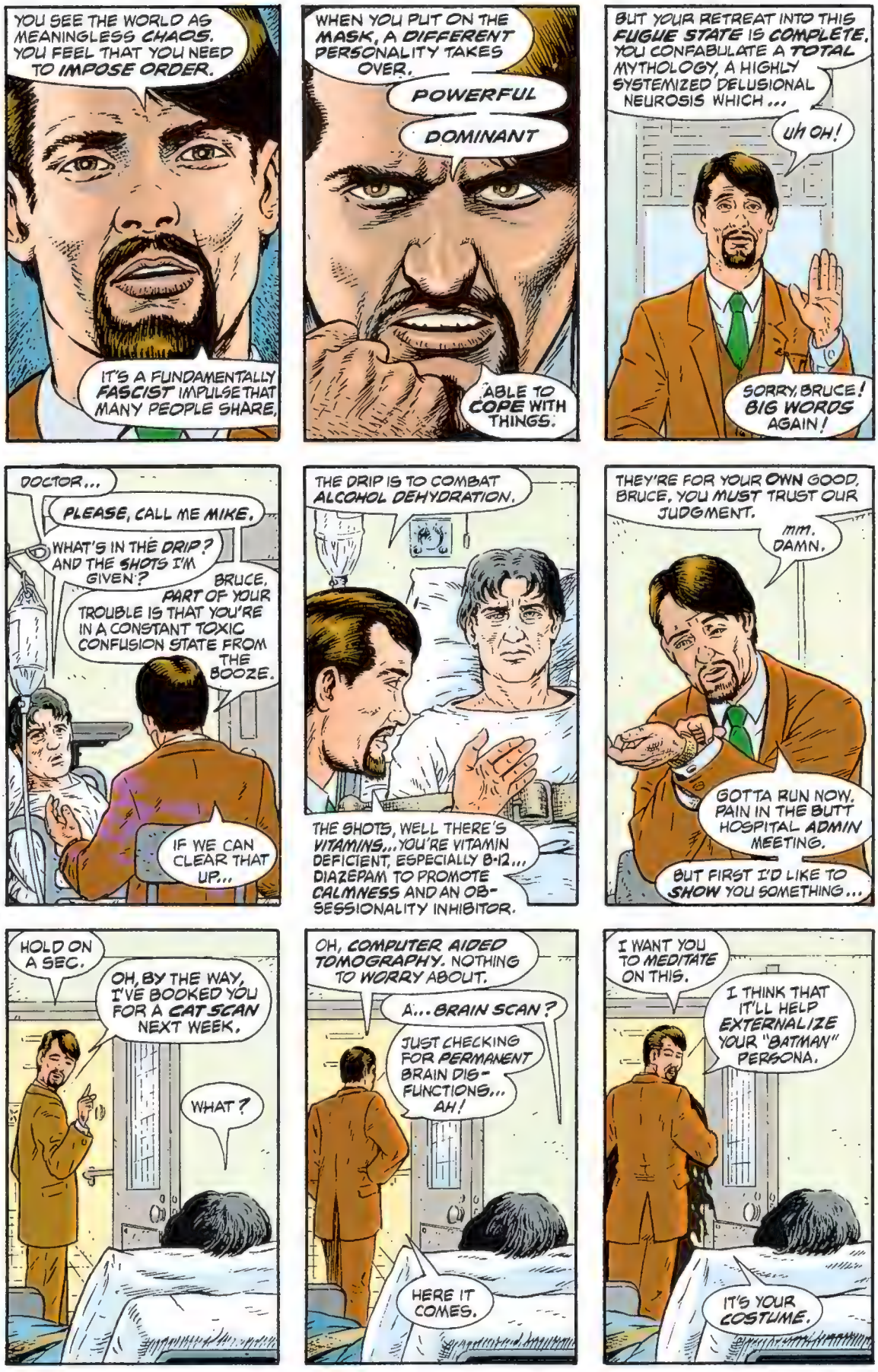
WE'RE READY, ALFRED. BRING THE CAR AROUND.
AT ONCE SIR.
GIVE ME THE MASK, BRUCE, THERE'S A GOOD BOY.
MY PARENTS ARE GOING TO A COSTUME BALL.
TO ME THEY LOOK UTTERLY GLAMOROUS.
ESPECIALLY FATHER.
SORRY ABOUT THE RESTRAINTS.
DOCTOR'S ORDERS.
APPARENTLY YOU'VE MADE VIOLENT ATTACKS ON STAFF WHEN YOU'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE.
WHU... WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OTHER GUY?
OH, MR. COHEN?
I'M AFRAID HE PASSED AWAY LAST NIGHT.
HE WAS A SWEET OLD MAN.
UH... JENNY, LISTEN...
HOW DID YOU... AH! MY I.D.
YOU... ER... YOU'RE A NICE PERSON.
THAT SOUNDED LAME BUT IT'S THE BEST I CAN COME UP WITH AT THE MOMENT.

I NEED TO ENLIST HER HELP.
TO ESCAPE.
WHY, THANK YOU, BRUCE. I... ah.
YOU'VE A VISITOR.
HI, THERE, BRUCE. I'M DOCTOR CLAYTON.
YOU JUST CALL ME MIKE.
I'M AN ANALYST... BUT DON'T LET THAT PUT YOU OFF! MAY I SIT DOWN?
THANK YOU.
IT'S ALRIGHT, BRUCE. I JUST WANT TO CHAT.
WAYNE B.
I WANT TO TALK ABOUT THE BATMAN.
HEY, LIGHTEN UP! I'M HERE TO HELP.
I... DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT...
C'MON BRUCE, ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS TRUST ME.
YOUR CASE IS WELL DOCUMENTED. I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU.
YOU'VE BEEN IN AND OUT OF INSTITUTIONS FOR YEARS.
OF COURSE YOUR SELECTIVE AMNESIA WON'T ALLOW YOU TO REMEMBER EVENTS THAT DON'T FIT IN WITH YOUR WORLD VIEW, YOUR "REALITY TUNNEL," IF YOU WILL.
I'M SURE THAT I CAN HELP YOU.
I DO SYMPATHIZE.
I'M GETTING ANGRY.
I CAN PERFECTLY UNDERSTAND WHY YOU HAVE THESE DELUSIONS OF BEING A MILLIONAIRE BY DAY AND A COSTUMED VIGILANTE BY NIGHT.
HELL, IT'S A RECURRING THEME IN DETECTIVE FICTION.
WHO'S BEHIND ALL THIS?
YOU NEVER RECOVERED FROM SEEING YOUR FOLKS GUNNED DOWN.
AND THEY LEFT HUGE DEBTS. YOU INHERITED NOTHING.
REPORT
CONFIDENTIAL
THEATER DISTRICT SLAYING
AT THE ORPHANAGE YOU WERE CONSTANTLY BULLIED. YOU RAN AWAY WHEN YOU WERE FOURTEEN AND VERY QUICKLY BECAME AN ALCOHOLIC.
ONE OF MY OLD FOES...

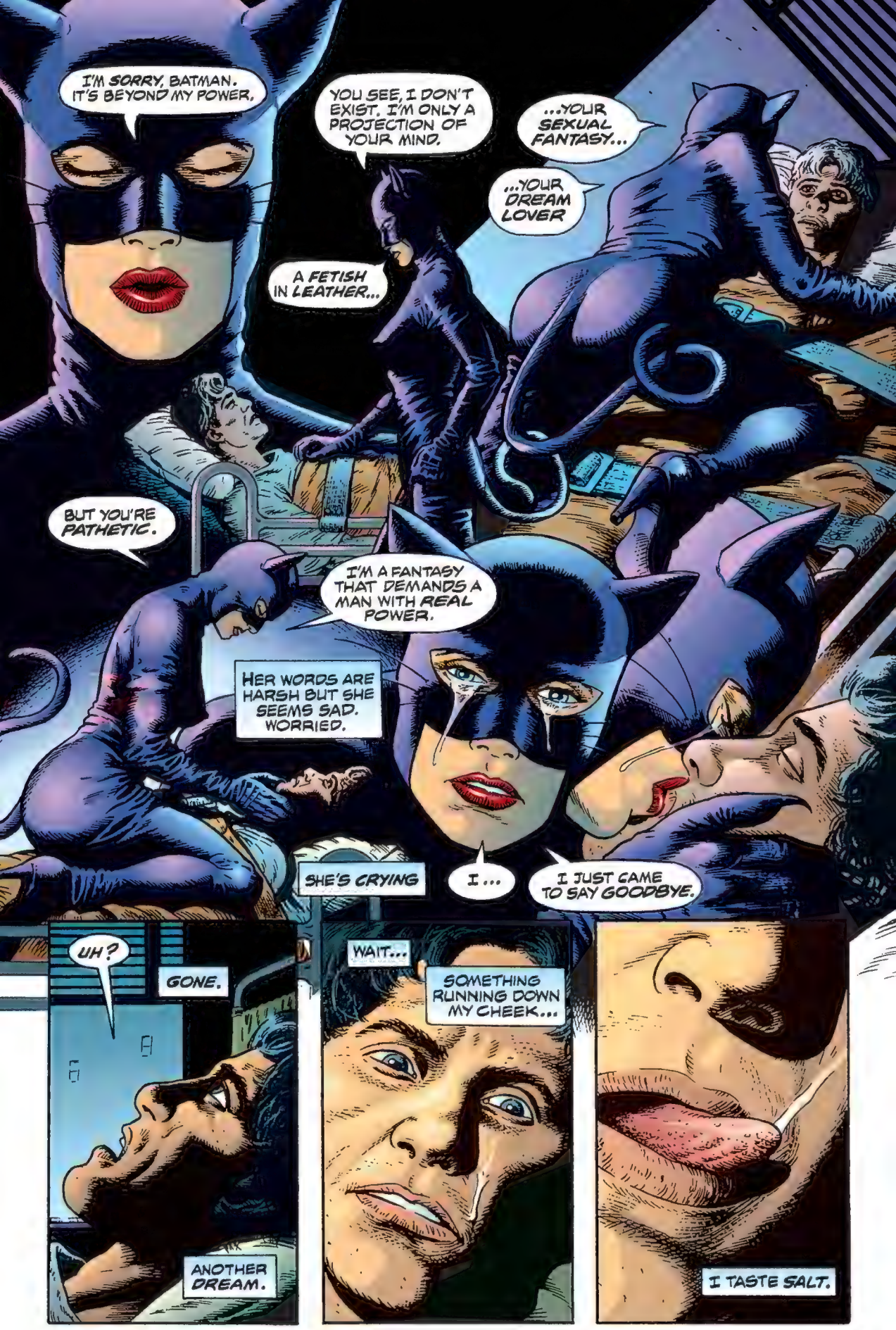
ABSOLUTELY POWERLESS IN REAL LIFE, IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT YOU SHOULD TAKE REFUGE IN VIVID FANTASIES OF POSSESSING REAL POWER.
BUT HEY! YOU GOT ME NOW.
THEN I NOTICE...
YOUR CASE SUITS MY RESEARCHES. I'VE TAKEN A PERSONAL INTEREST.
TOGETHER WE'LL FIGHT THIS THING.
HE'S WEARING A MASK!
AAAAARRGH!
WHO... ARE...
...YOU!
NO! PLEASE!
HA HA HA

I FEEL HAPPY
SECURE
I'M IN BACK OF A PURRING LIMOUSINE WITH MY PARENTS.
I SNUGGLE AGAINST MY MOTHER'S MINK COAT, BREATHING IN HER EXPENSIVE PERFUME.
MY FATHER IS SPEAKING.
JUST DROP US OFF AT THE MOVIE THEATER, ALFRED. DON'T WAIT. WE'LL GET HOME ON OUR OWN.
NO! YOU MUSTN'T GO!
PLEASE STOP THE CAR! WE'VE GOT TO TURN BACK!
MOTHER? FATHER?
YES, SON?
TH...THANKS FOR THE SHAVE.
IT MAKES ME FEEL A LITTLE BETTER.
UH... WHERE'S JENNY?
THERE WE GO. LAST MOUTHFUL.
'S JENNY'S DAY OFF. SHE'LL BE BACK REAL SOON.
YOU TAKEN A SHINE T'HER?
MMHM
THAT'S NICE.
HMPH. HERE'S YOUR SHRINK.
YO, BRUCE!
HOW'S IT GOIN'?


I NEARLY SAY THAT I'M DYING FOR A DRINK.
I DON'T KNOW WHY.
WELL, YOU'RE LOOKING A LOT BETTER TODAY.
I AM... BETTER.
I'M ALRIGHT NOW, REALLY. I WANT TO DISCHARGE MYSELF.
I...DEMAND TO LEAVE.
HMM. THAT'S JUST NOT POSSIBLE, BRUCE. YOU'RE BEING HELD FOR OBSERVATION. IT'S NOT MY DECISION.
I HAVE TO ASSESS YOUR MENTAL STATE. I MEAN, YOU MAY HAVE TO BE SENT AWAY FOR TREATMENT.
TO... ARKHAM ASYLUM?
WHERE?
HEY, THIS IS THE TWENTIETH CENTURY!
WE DON'T USE WORDS LIKE "ASYLUM"... TOO MANY BAD CONNOTATIONS, Y' KNOW.
BRUCE. LOOK, I KNOW THAT THERE'S AN INTELLIGENT MAN IN THERE SOMEWHERE.
NOW, WHILE YOU'RE IN A STATE OF LUCIDITY, I'D LIKE TO EXPLAIN JUST WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU.
IT MIGHT HELP TO START YOU THINKING.
HELP YOU TO START PUTTING THINGS INTO PERSPECTIVE. HELP YOU TO SLOWLY RATIONALIZE YOUR SITUATION.
WHAT WE'VE GOT HERE IS CLASSIC HYSTERICAL NEUROSIS. WHAT WE CALL HYSTERICAL DISASSOCIATIVE PHENOMENA.
LONG WORDS, HUH?
PUT SIMPLY, YOU DISSOCIATE YOURSELF FROM YOUR OTHER PERSONALITIES.
THIS IS OFTEN CHARACTERIZED BY AMNESIA OR ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS.
YOU FLEE INTO THIS "BATMAN" IDENTITY IN AN ATTEMPT TO CONTROL YOUR WORLD.
THE REAL WORLD MAKES NO SENSE TO YOU. IT KILLED YOUR PARENTS AND SCREWED YOU INTO THE GROUND.


YOU SEE THE WORLD AS MEANINGLESS CHAOS. YOU FEEL THAT YOU NEED TO IMPOSE ORDER.
IT'S A FUNDAMENTALLY FASCIST IMPULSE THAT MANY PEOPLE SHARE.
WHEN YOU PUT ON THE MASK, A DIFFERENT PERSONALITY TAKES OVER.
POWERFUL
DOMINANT
ABLE TO COPE WITH THINGS.
BUT YOUR RETREAT INTO THIS FUGUE STATE IS COMPLETE. YOU CONFABULATE A TOTAL MYTHOLOGY, A HIGHLY SYSTEMIZED DELUSIONAL NEUROSIS WHICH ...
UH OH!
SORRY, BRUCE! BIG WORDS AGAIN!
DOCTOR...
PLEASE, CALL ME MIKE.
WHAT'S IN THE DRIP? AND THE SHOTS I'M GIVEN?
BRUCE, PART OF YOUR TROUBLE IS THAT YOU'RE IN A CONSTANT TOXIC CONFUSION STATE FROM THE BOOZE.
IF WE CAN CLEAR THAT UP...
THE DRIP IS TO COMBAT ALCOHOL DEHYDRATION.
THE SHOTS, WELL THERE'S VITAMINS,...YOU'RE VITAMIN DEFICIENT, ESPECIALLY B-12..., DIAZEPAM TO PROMOTE CALMNESS AND AN OBSESSIONALITY INHIBITOR.
THEY'RE FOR YOUR OWN GOOD, BRUCE. YOU MUST TRUST OUR JUDGMENT.
MM. DAMN.
GOTTA RUN NOW. PAIN IN THE BUTT HOSPITAL ADMIN MEETING.
BUT FIRST I'D LIKE TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING...
HOLD ON A SEC.
OH, BY THE WAY, I'VE BOOKED YOU FOR A CAT SCAN NEXT WEEK.
WHAT?
OH, COMPUTER AIDED TOMOGRAPHY. NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.
A... BRAIN SCAN?
JUST CHECKING FOR PERMANENT BRAIN DIS-FUNCTIONS... AH!
HERE IT COMES.
I WANT YOU TO MEDITATE ON THIS.
I THINK THAT IT'LL HELP EXTERNALIZE YOUR "BATMAN" PERSONA.
IT'S YOUR COSTUME.

HEY! CATCH YOU LATER!
" I SHALL BECOME A BAT".
I STARE AT THE COLLECTION OF TRASH BAGS, RUBBER GLOVES AND BOOTS IN GROWING SELF-DOUBT.
I STRUGGLE TO RECALL MY CAREER AS BATMAN.
I'M SURE THAT I DO REMEMBER THINGS BUT THEY SLIP AWAY.
DIMLY SENSED THINGS ON THE EDGE OF VISION THAT DISAPPEAR WHEN YOU TRY TO LOOK AT THEM.
CAN IT REALLY BE TRUE?
AM I REALLY INSANE?
MAD AS A HATTER...
BATS IN THE BELFRY?
SELF-PITY IS IT, NOW?
SO IT'S FINALLY COME TO THIS.
DON'T YOU JUST WISH...
...WE COULD HAVE MADE LOVE JUST ONCE?
C-CATWOMAN. YOU MUST HELP ME. UNDO THE STRAPS.

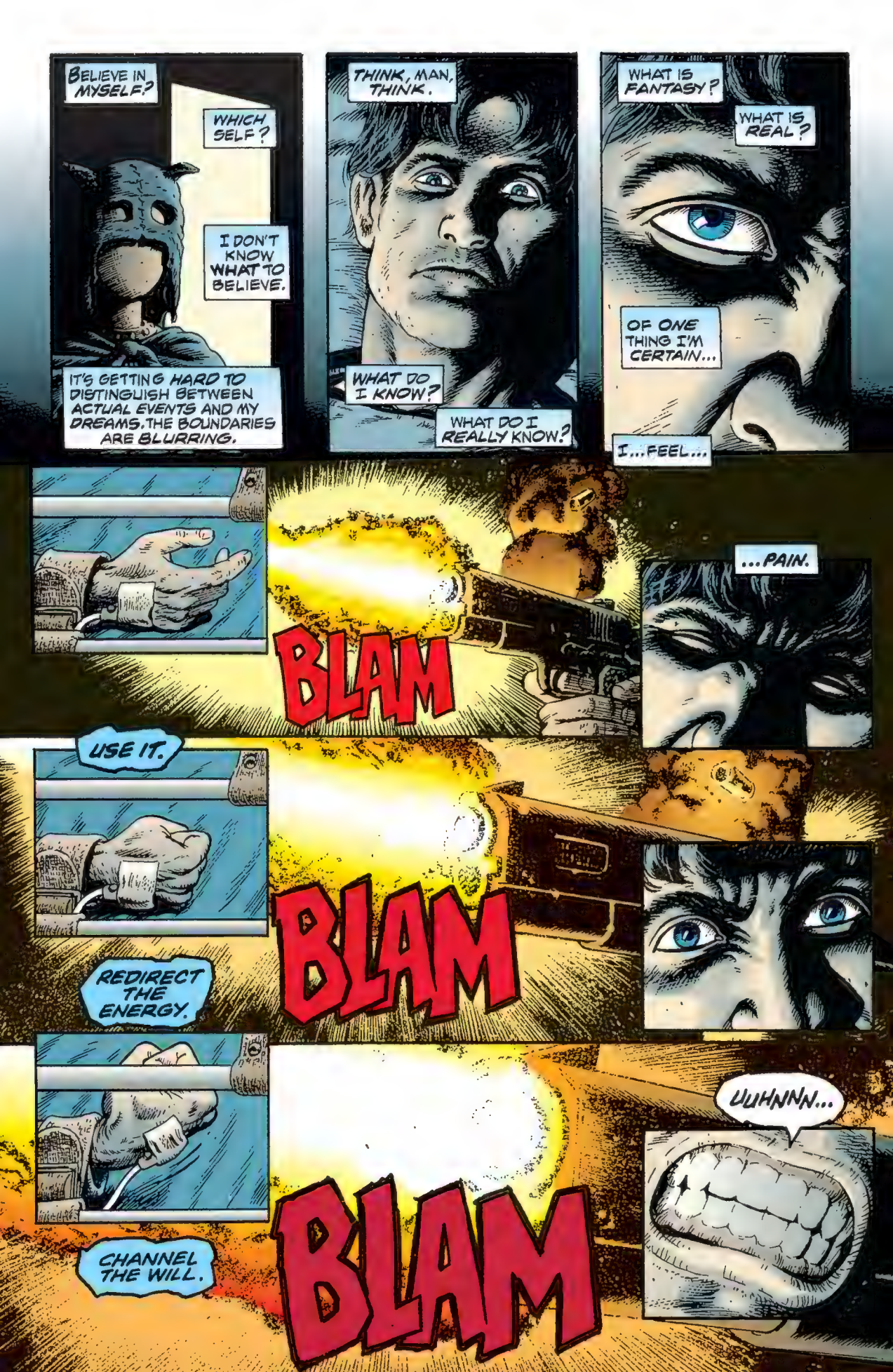

I'M SORRY, BATMAN. IT'S BEYOND MY POWER.
YOU SEE, I DON'T EXIST. I'M ONLY A PROJECTION OF YOUR MIND.
...YOUR SEXUAL FANTASY...
...YOUR DREAM LOVER
A FETISH IN LEATHER...
BUT YOU'RE PATHETIC.
I'M A FANTASY THAT DEMANDS A MAN WITH REAL POWER.
HER WORDS ARE HARSH BUT SHE SEEMS SAD. WORRIED.
SHE'S CRYING
I...
I JUST CAME TO SAY GOODBYE.
UH?
GONE.
ANOTHER DREAM.
WAIT...
SOMETHING RUNNING DOWN MY CHEEK...
I TASTE SALT.

MASKS HAVE POWER.
DID YOU KNOW THAT THE WORD "PERSONA" ORIGINALLY MEANT "MASK"?
ACCORDING TO JUNG, THIS IS THE PERSONALITY ASSUMED BY AN INDIVIDUAL IN ADAPTATION TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD.
THERE'S YOUR MASK, BRUCE.
AND YOU DIDN'T MAKE IT JUST TO HIDE YOUR FACE.
SOME MASKS WERE USED IN BATTLE, TO FRIGHTEN THE ENEMY.
WAS THAT YOUR IDEA WITH THIS ONE?
SOME ARE SYMBOLS OF DEEP RELIGIOUS OR PERSONAL BELIEF SYSTEMS.
AFRICA
THEY COULD TRANSFORM AN ORDINARY PERSON INTO A SUPERNATURAL BEING.
IN AFRICA, PEOPLE SAW THEIR FELLOW TRIBESMEN TRANSFORMED INTO SPIRITS, DEMONS, ANIMALS...
AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL "BUSH SOUL" MASKS CONFERRED TO THE WEARER THE POWER OF THE ANIMAL OR BIRD THAT THEY REPRESENTED.
WHEN YOU PUT ON YOUR MASK, A DIFFERENT PERSONALITY TAKES OVER.
WHY CHOOSE A BAT?
SOMETHING FROM YOUR CHILDHOOD, I'LL BET.
BUT IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE.
THE BAT REPRESENTS DARKNESS. IT'S ASSOCIATED WITH WITCHCRAFT, BLACK MAGIC, VAMPIRISM.
IN CHRISTIAN MYTHOLOGY IT IS "THE BIRD OF THE DEVIL", AN INCARNATION OF THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS.
SATAN IS OFTEN DEPICTED WITH BATS' WINGS. DO YOU SEE WHAT I'M GETTING AT?
BATMAN IS YOUR DARK SIDE, YOUR NEGATIVE SIDE.

HE'S DESTRUCTIVE.
REPRESSIVE.
EVIL.
YOU HAVE TO DENY HIM, BRUCE.
WELL. I THINK THAT'S ENOUGH FOR TODAY. I'M LATE FOR MY NEXT... or...
...IS THERE ANYTHING WRONG?
NO
NOTHING.
NOTHING.
DOCTOR?
MIKE, BRUCE, MIKE.
IS IT POSSIBLE... COULD I LISTEN TO THE RADIO? THE NEWS CHANNEL?
BRUCE, I LIKE THE WAY YOU'RE GETTING INTO THE SWING OF THINGS.
IF YOU CONTINUE TO MAKE PROGRESS, WE CAN LOSE THE RESTRAINTS.
YOU LIKE THE NEWS?
I'LL SEE ABOUT GETTING YOU A TV IN HERE. CIAO!
...AND THAT WAS "DIE FLEDERMAUS", CONDUCTED THERE BY SIR PETER MAXWELL DAVIES. NEXT WE HAVE THE GOTHAM PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS'S MOVING PERFORMANCE OF MOZART'S REQUIEM MASS...
NO
WRONG CHANNEL
HE'S GONE
MIKE!
THE REQUIEM. I CAN'T BEAR TO HEAR IT.
THE LAST TIME I HEARD IT WAS AT THEIR FUNERAL I WANTED TO RIP THE LIDS OFF THEIR COFFINS AND...
NO!
IT'S TORTURE
AGONY
SWITCH IT OFF! SWITCH IT OFF!
PURE TORTURE
SWITCH IT OFF.
PLEASE...

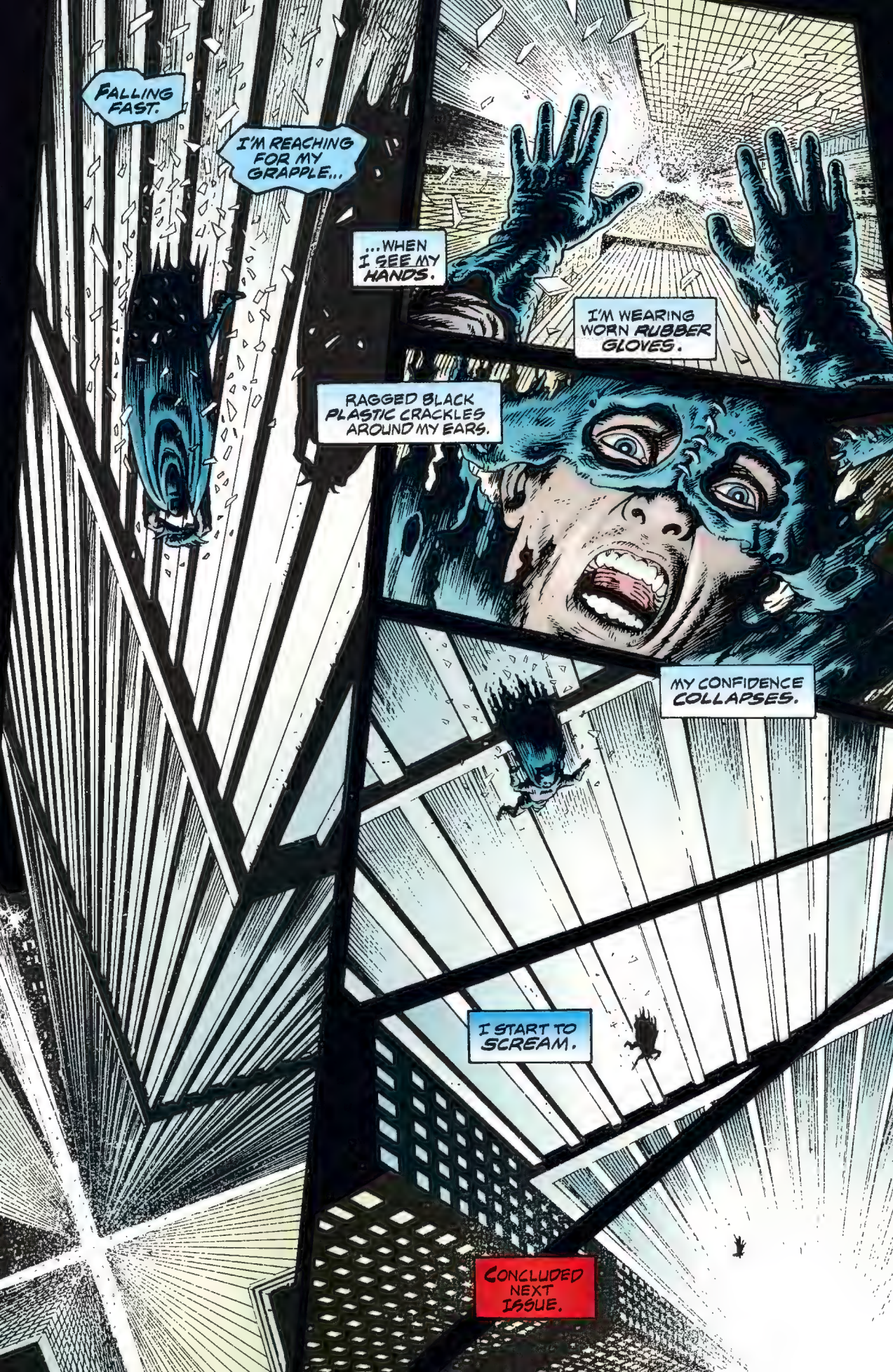
I'M AT THE MOVIES WITH MY PARENTS.
THE FILM FREEZES MID-FRAME.
TIME HAS STOPPED FOR EVERYONE.
EXCEPT ME.
I HAVE TO FIND SOMEONE.
OUTSIDE
WAITING IN THE NIGHT.
FROZEN IN TIME.
THIS TIME I CAN STOP HIM. THIS TIME I CAN...
I CAN'T TOUCH HIM.
I'M NOTHING
A GHOST FROM THE FUTURE.
HE COMES TO LIFE.
OH NO.

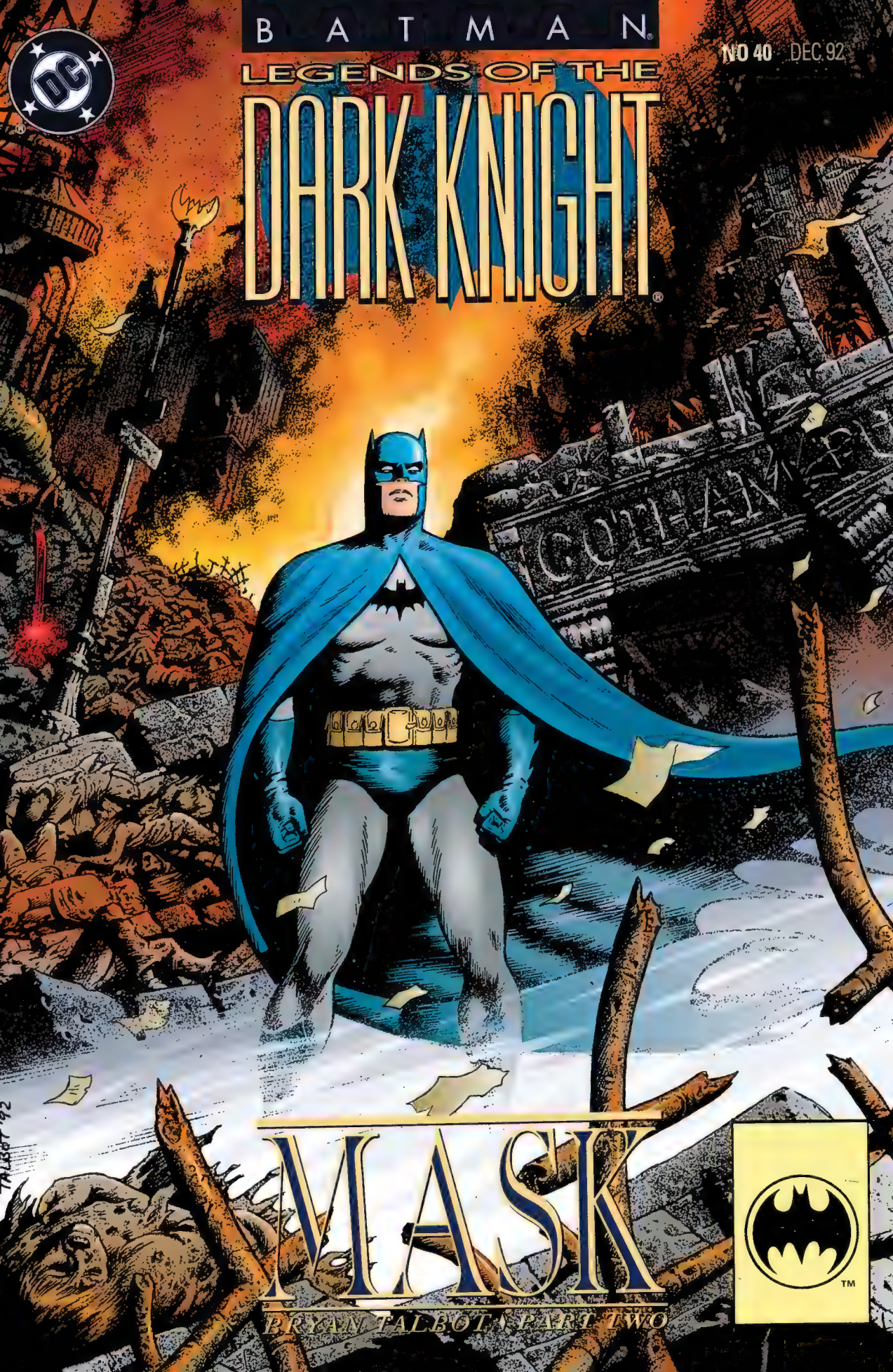
I SHOUT BUT THEY CAN'T HEAR ME.
OF COURSE THEY CAN'T.
I CAN ONLY WATCH.
BLAM
I HATE BEING ESCORTED TO THE BATHROOM.
I'M STILL WEAK... WOOZY.
I'VE WATCHED TV FOR TWO DAYS. THERE'S STILL NO MENTION OF BATMAN. I'M TIRED.
...AND FROM EVENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST WE MOVE CLOSER TO HOME...
JENNY? COULD YOU KILL THE TV?
I WANT TO SLEEP.
EXTERMINATORS ARE BEING CALLED IN TO DEAL WITH THE TERRIBLE BAT INFESTATION PROBLEM IN GOTHAM CENTER. DETAILS RIGHT AFTER THIS MESSAGE...
SURE, BRUCE.
I'LL TUCK YOU IN.
BRUCE?
WILL YOU DO ONE THING FOR ME?
BELIEVE IN YOURSELF.


BELIEVE IN MYSELF?
WHICH SELF?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO BELIEVE.
IT'S GETTING HARD TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN ACTUAL EVENTS AND MY DREAMS. THE BOUNDARIES ARE BLURRING.
THINK, MAN, THINK.
WHAT DO I KNOW?
WHAT DO I REALLY KNOW?
WHAT IS FANTASY?
WHAT IS REAL?
OF ONE THING I'M CERTAIN...
I...FEEL...
BLAM
...PAIN.
USE IT.
BLAM
REDIRECT THE ENERGY.
UUHNNN...
CHANNEL THE WILL.
BLAM

...NNNGGGGG...
...GGAAAHHHH!
THAT TOOK ALL MY STRENGTH. I'LL HAVE TO LIE DOWN FOR A...
NO.
GET UP.
NOW.
CONCENTRATE
THAT'S IT.
I AM THE BATMAN.

AND I'M LEAVING
THEN SOMEONE'S GOING TO PAY.
CRAAAASH


FALLING FAST.
I'M REACHING FOR MY GRAPPLE...
...WHEN I SEE MY HANDS.
I'M WEARING WORN RUBBER GLOVES.
RAGGED BLACK PLASTIC CRACKLES AROUND MY EARS.
MY CONFIDENCE COLLAPSES.
I START TO SCREAM.
CONCLUDED NEXT ISSUE.

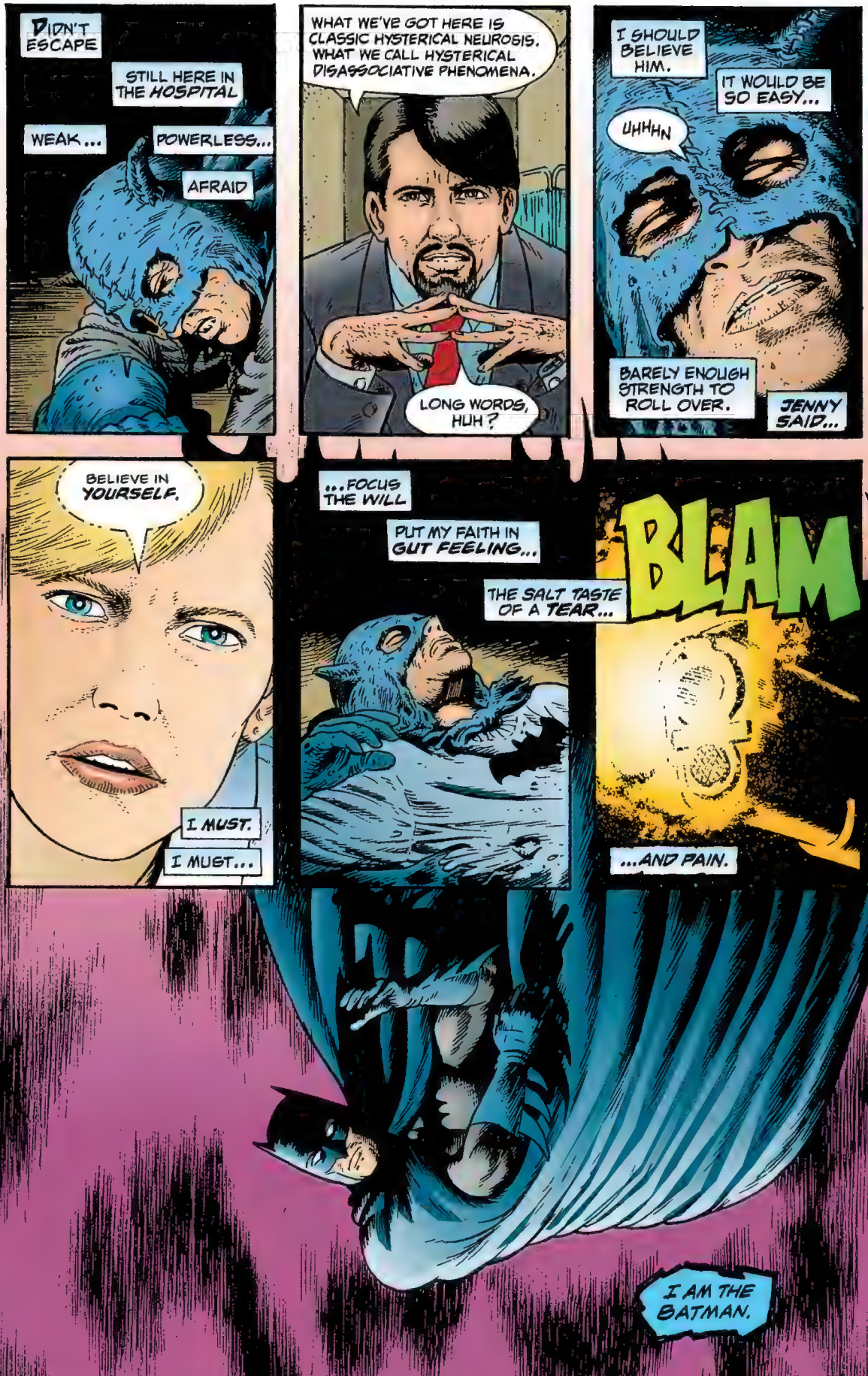

BATMAN
NO 40 DEC 92
LEGENDS OF THE
DARK KNIGHT
MASK
BRYAN TALBOT PART TWO
TALBOT '92
TM

by BRYAN TALBOT

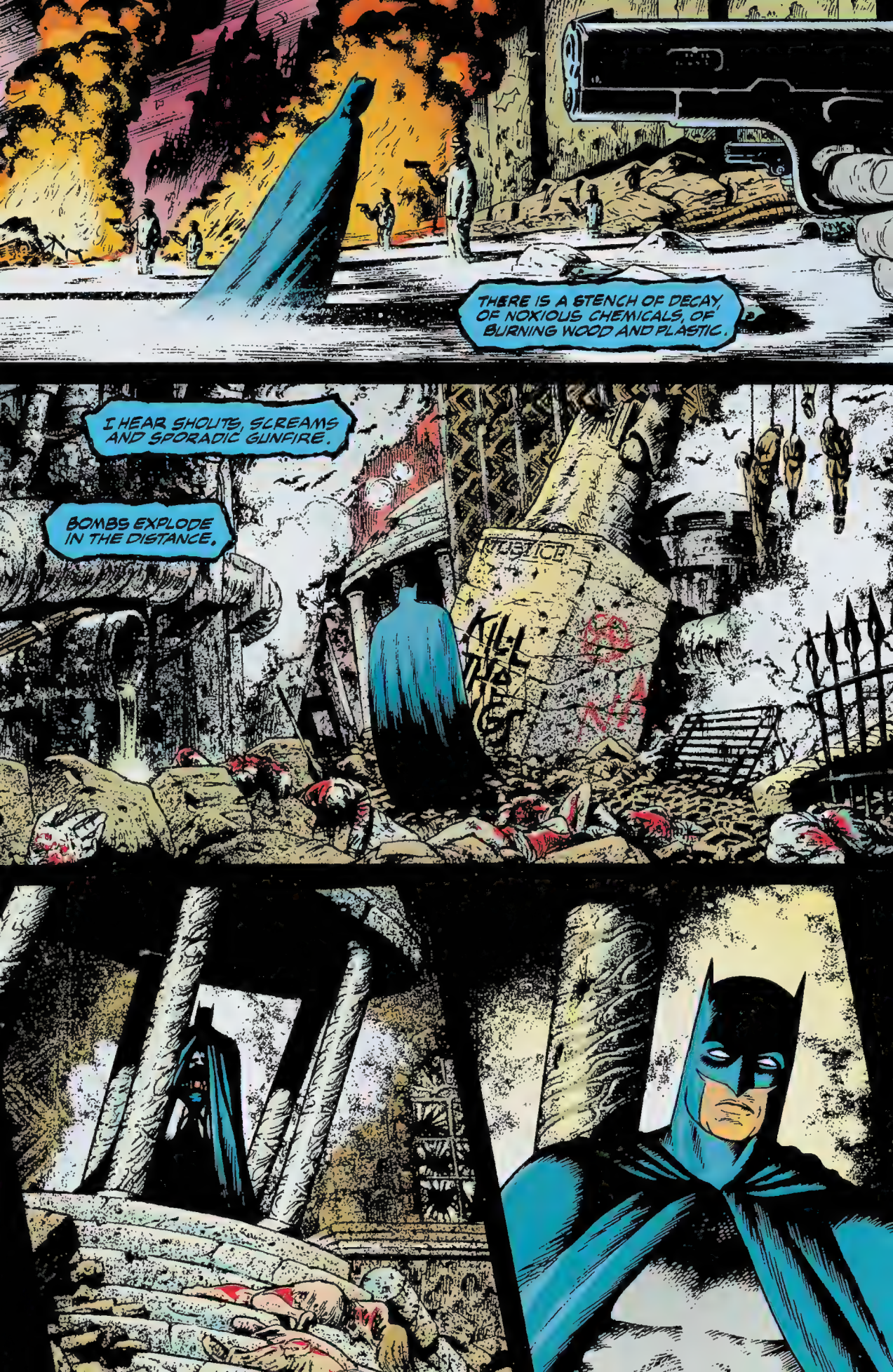
Colors OLYOPTICS | Letters GASPAR | Editors GOODWIN & KAPLAN

BATMAN created by BOB KANE

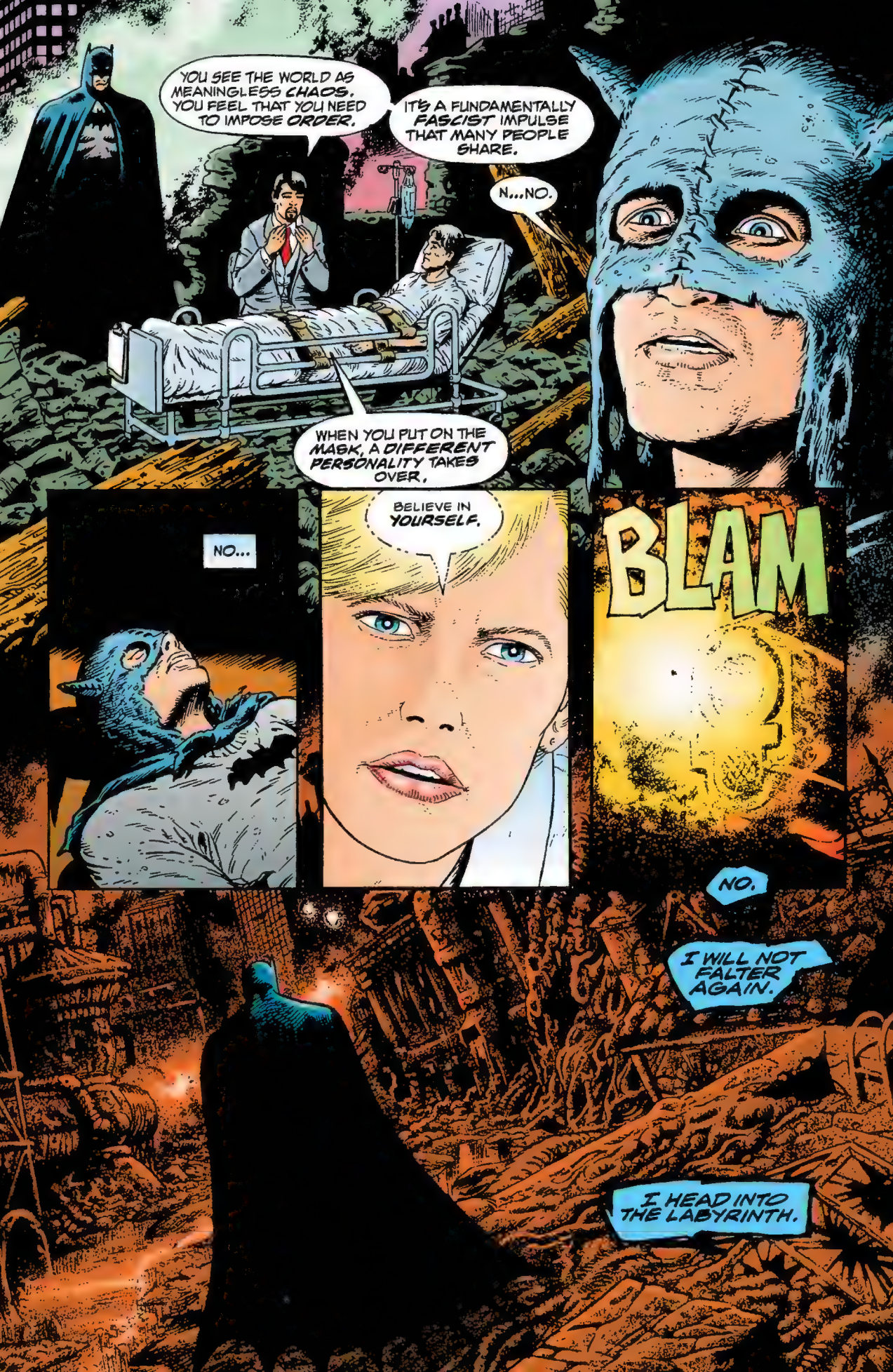
THE FALL IS ENDLESS.
IT SUDDENLY REMINDS ME OF THE OLD BLACK-AND-WHITE SERIALS I USED TO WATCH ON TV WHEN I WAS A KID.
THE HERO WOULD BE THROWN OFF A SKYSCRAPER.
HE'D FALL FOR AN ETERNITY BEFORE THE "TO BE CONTINUED" LOGO CAME UP.
THE SEQUEL WOULD SHOW HIM DROPPING ONE FLOOR TO LAND SAFELY ON A FIRE ESCAPE.
IT ALMOST MAKES ME LAUGH.
OOOFF!
BUUUMP!


DIDN'T ESCAPE
STILL HERE IN THE HOSPITAL
WEAK...
POWERLESS...
AFRAID
WHAT WE'VE GOT HERE IS CLASSIC HYSTERICAL NEUROSIS. WHAT WE CALL HYSTERICAL DISASSOCIATIVE PHENOMENA.
LONG WORDS, HUH?
I SHOULD BELIEVE HIM.
IT WOULD BE SO EASY...
UHHHN
BARELY ENOUGH STRENGTH TO ROLL OVER.
JENNY SAID...
BELIEVE IN YOURSELF.
I MUST.
I MUST...
...FOCUS THE WILL
PUT MY FAITH IN GUT FEELING...
THE SALT TASTE OF A TEAR...
BLAM
...AND PAIN.
I AM THE BATMAN.

CRUMP!
Gotham Gazette
BATMAN
I'M BACK.
WELCOME TO GOTHAM.


THERE IS A STENCH OF DECAY, OF NOXIOUS CHEMICALS, OF BURNING WOOD AND PLASTIC.
I HEAR SHOUTS, SCREAMS AND SPORADIC GUNFIRE.
BOMBS EXPLODE IN THE DISTANCE.
JUSTICE
KILL
KILL

I KNOW WHAT THIS IS.
A NIGHTMARE.
GOTHAM WITHOUT THE BATMAN.
CHAOS
ANARCHY.
LACK OF ORDER.


YOU SEE THE WORLD AS MEANINGLESS CHAOS. YOU FEEL THAT YOU NEED TO IMPOSE ORDER.
IT'S A FUNDAMENTALLY FASCIST IMPULSE THAT MANY PEOPLE SHARE.
N...NO.
WHEN YOU PUT ON THE MASK, A DIFFERENT PERSONALITY TAKES OVER.
NO...
BELIEVE IN YOURSELF.
BLAM
NO.
I WILL NOT FALTER AGAIN.
I HEAD INTO THE LABYRINTH.

I PASS MY REAL ENEMY...
AVARICE
GREED
GREED SPAWNS CRIME
ROBBERY
MURDER
DRUG DEALING
PROSTITUTION
EMBEZZLEMENT
FRAUD
GRAFT
CORRUPTION
CONSPIRACY
AAAIEEE!
A WOMAN IN TROUBLE...

NO! HELP! PLEASE!
IGNORE IT
THIS ISN'T REALLY HAPPENING.
I REALIZE THAT THIS IS ALL IN MY MIND. AND BESIDES...
...I'M BEING SUMMONED.
BRUCE!
MOTHER?
MOTHER!

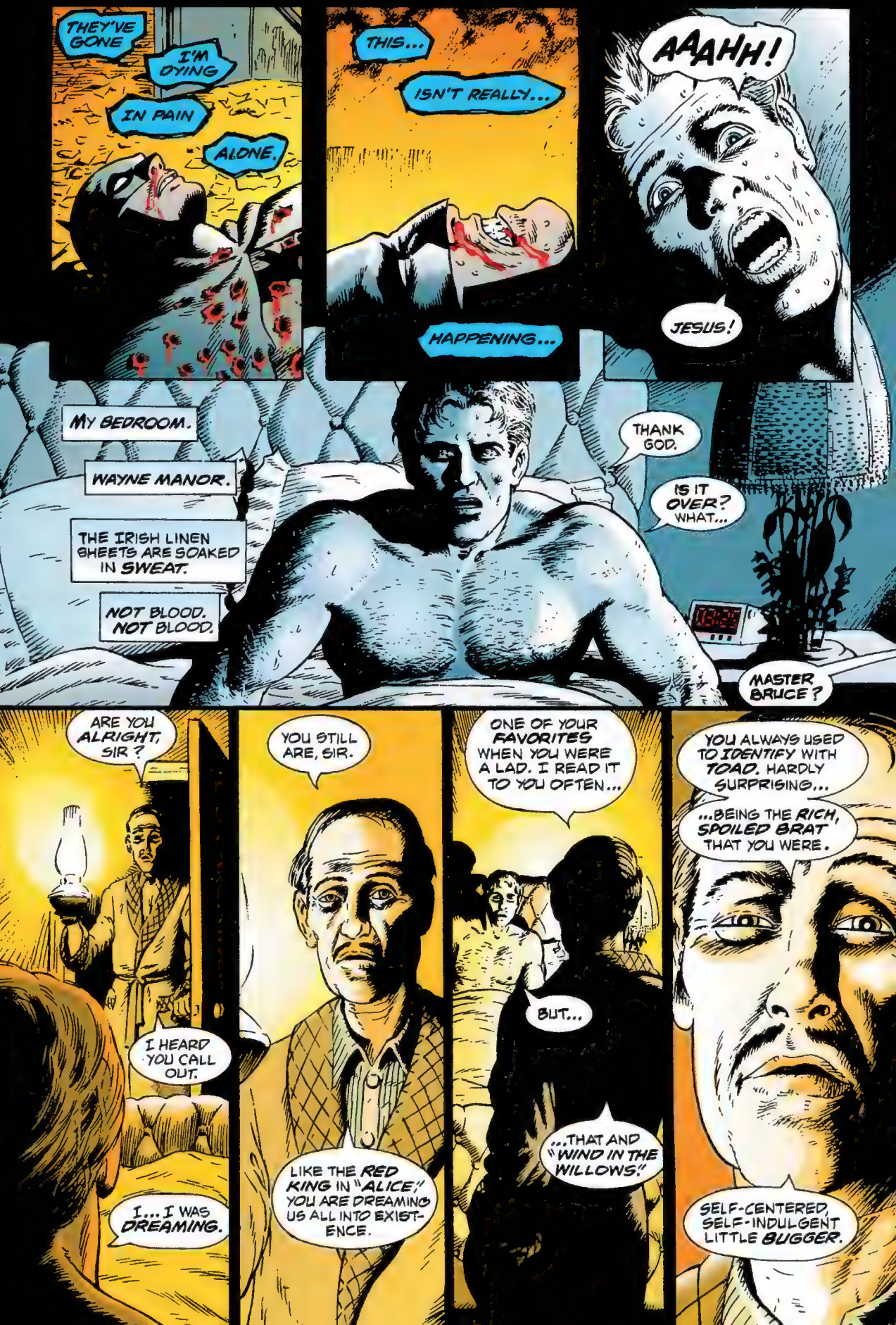
WOK!
CHUD
KRAK
THWAP
SPLUD

SPLAK
WUMP
THUNK
THOK
MOTHER?
IT'S ALRIGHT, MOM. I SAVED YOU.
MOM?

YOU'RE DEAD.
I CAN NEVER SAVE YOU.
DREAMS CONSTANTLY FEED ON THE CORPSE OF THE PAST.
SOMETIMES DREAMS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE GLIMPSES OF THE FUTURE.
DISLOCATED IN TIME...
...THEIR MEANING IS OBSCURED.

THIS IS IT.
THE TRUTH IS WAITING FOR ME.
I HAVE TO DECIDE WHAT I BELIEVE IN.

HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!
JIM?
DON'T "JIM" ME, YOU MEGALOMANIAC!
THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT. A PRODUCT OF YOUR TWISTED MIND.
JUST WHO THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?
A HERO?
A SAVIOUR?
A GOD?
I AM THE BATMAN.
BLOW THIS MOMMY'S BOY AWAY!
BUDDABUDDABUDDABUDDA


THEY'VE GONE
I'M DYING
IN PAIN
ALONE.
THIS...
ISN'T REALLY...
HAPPENING...
AAAHH!
JESUS!
MY BEDROOM.
WAYNE MANOR.
THE IRISH LINEN SHEETS ARE SOAKED IN SWEAT.
NOT BLOOD. NOT BLOOD.
THANK GOD.
IS IT OVER? WHAT...
MASTER BRUCE?
ARE YOU ALRIGHT, SIR?
I HEARD YOU CALL OUT.
I... I WAS DREAMING.
YOU STILL ARE, SIR.
LIKE THE RED KING IN "ALICE," YOU ARE DREAMING US ALL INTO EXISTENCE.
ONE OF YOUR FAVORITES WHEN YOU WERE A LAD. I READ IT TO YOU OFTEN...
BUT...
...THAT AND "WIND IN THE WILLOWS."
YOU ALWAYS USED TO IDENTIFY WITH TOAD. HARDLY SURPRISING...
...BEING THE RICH, SPOILED BRAT THAT YOU WERE.
SELF-CENTERED, SELF-INDULGENT LITTLE BUGGER.

BUT I DIGRESS. I MUST FULFILL MY PROPER DRAMATIC FUNCTION IN THIS PETTY MELO-DRAMA.
I'M HERE TO SHOW YOU THE WAY BACK.
IF YOU WOULD BE SO GOOD AS TO FOLLOW ME, MASTER BRUCE...
I COULD TELL YOU WHICH IS THE CORRECT DOORWAY BUT YOU NEVER LISTEN TO ME ANYWAY, SO WHAT'S THE POINT?
I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHY I BOTHER.
CHOOSE.
IT'S OBVIOUS.
I CHOOSE THIS WAY.
I ALREADY HAVE.
SOMEONE WANTS TO DESTROY ME. IT'S BEEN A CLEVER SCAM, BUT THEY'VE FAILED. I HAVE NOT BEEN BROKEN.
THESE THINGS I BELIEVE. THESE THINGS I KNOW.
I CHOOSE TO BELIEVE IN MYSELF.

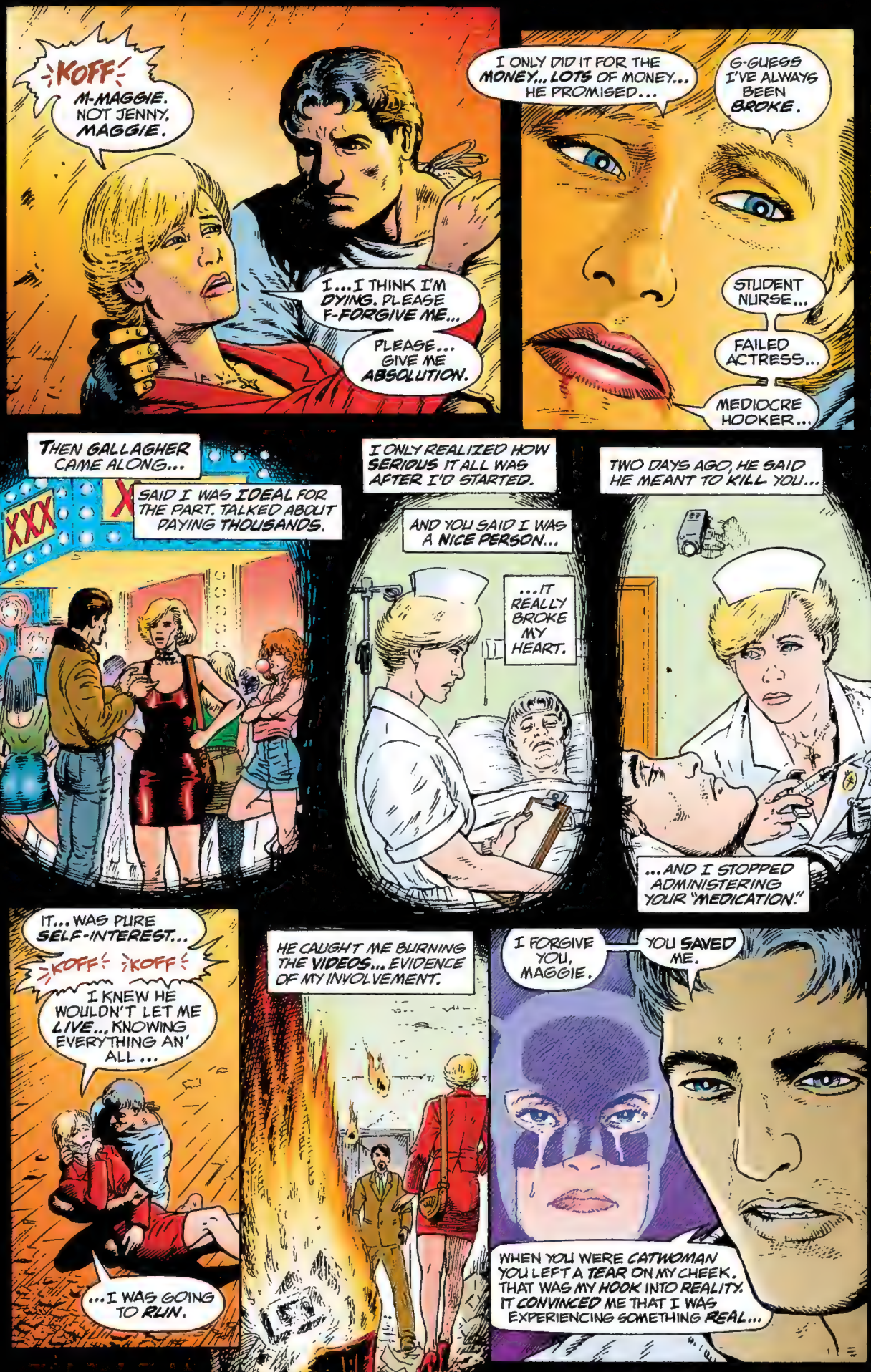
MY BLOOD EBBS AWAY.
IT BUBBLES IN MY THROAT.
THE SMOKE IS OVERPOWERING.
I MUST WRENCH MYSELF OUT OF THIS...
...NOW!
THE WINDOW...
THE VIEW...
PAINTED CLOTH.
THE PLACE IS ON FIRE.
I HEAR VOICES...
SHOUTING...
ARGUING...
LET'S GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS.
EXIT
...BUT YOU'RE INSANE!
I...I NEVER AGREED TO MURDER!
JUST CALM DOWN, MY DEAR.
LOOK. LOWER THE GUN.
YOU'RE NOT REALLY GOING TO SHOOT ME, ARE YOU?
I PROMISE.
NOTHING'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO YOU.
YOU CAN LEAVE ANY TIME YOU WANT TO.

IN FACT, LEAVE NOW.
THE FIRE'S SPREADING. ALL YOU'VE DONE IS SPEED UP THE PROCESS.
OK...OK... BUT I...
GO. NOW.
GOODBYE, MY DEAR.
BLAM
STUPID SLUT.
WHA...OOOF!
STILL SHAKY
MISTIMED THAT BLOW BADLY.
MUSTN'T LET HIM...
BACK OFF! BACK OFF!
YOU SO MUCH AS BLINK AND YOU'RE DOGMEAT!
DAMN YOU!
I WANTED YOU TO SUFFER FOR MUCH LONGER BEFORE YOU DIED.
BUT WHY?
WHAT HAVE I EVER DONE TO YOU?
SHUT UP! SHUT UP!
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT YOU DID TO ME...

YOU KILLED MY PARENTS.
IRONIC, ISN'T IT?
MIKE, CALM DOWN. LISTEN. IT'S AGAINST MY CODE TO...
I TOLD YOU TO SHUT UP! AND THE NAME'S NOT MIKE.
IT'S STEVEN. STEVEN GALLAGHER.
RING ANY BELLS?
GALLAGHER...? NO RELATION TO RAYMOND "GREASY THUMBS" GALLAGHER?
DON'T YOU CALL HIM THAT! DAD HATED THAT NAME!
YOU'RE DEAD, WAYNE. DEAD!
YOU GET NAMES LIKE THAT WHEN YOU WORK FOR GANGSTERS. HE LAUNDERED MONEY FOR THE CAMPBELL MOB.
HE WAS A RESPECTABLE BUSINESSMAN!
ALL I KNOW IS THAT YOU ENDED HIS CAREER.
I SAW YOU, YOU! IN OUR HOUSE...
I WAS SHOWING HIM THE ERROR OF HIS WAYS. I HAD EVIDENCE. HE GAVE ME SOME NAMES.
YOU BROKE HIM.
HE STARTED TO DRINK. HEAVILY.
HE COULDN'T REPAY THE LOAN...
THE VAST AMOUNT HE'D BORROWED FROM THE MOB.
SH. SHUT UP.
SHUT UP.
MY... MY MOTHER... SHE...
...SHE COULD SENSE THAT SOMETHING WAS GOING TO HAPPEN...
...GAVE ME HER DIAMONDS... TOLD ME TO GO AWAY... LIE LOW...
I RETURNED THAT NIGHT TO TALK TO HER...
THEY WERE BOTH...
Freud
PSYCHOLOGY
...IT WAS YOUR FAULT.

SINCE THEN I'VE SPENT ALL MY TIME AND MONEY PREPARING YOUR PUNISHMENT.
SEVEN WEEKS AGO I GOT LUCKY. YOU WALKED INTO MY BAT-TRAP.
IT WAS A STAKE-OUT. I PAID THOSE PUNKS TO ACT OUT THE BREAK-IN, NIGHT AFTER NIGHT UNTIL YOU SHOWED UP.
THE INFRA-RED SIGHT ON MY HIGH-POWERED AIR RIFLE MADE YOU AN EASY TARGET.
AFTER YOU PASSED OUT IT WAS A SIMPLE MATTER TO BUNDLE YOU INTO MY STATION WAGON AND BRING YOU HERE.
I THOUGHT I'D BLOWN IT WHEN THE COPS TURNED UP.
YOU WERE SO BUSY BUSTING HEADS THAT YOU DIDN'T NOTICE THE TINY DART PIERCE YOUR COSTUME.
BUT WHEN THE PSYCHOTROPIC HEAVY SEDATIVE STARTED TO WORK, YOU CONVENIENTLY TOOK OFF.
YOU'RE ONE HEAVY BASTARD, YOU KNOW THAT?
IMAGINE MY SURPRISE WHEN I REMOVED YOUR COWL. YOU COULD HAVE KNOCKED ME DOWN WITH A FEATHER.
GOTHAM'S MOST FAMOUS PLAYBOY...
BRUCE WAYNE.
IT MADE MY JOB SO MUCH SIMPLER.
A COUPLE OF TRIPS TO GOTHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY FURNISHED ME WITH ALL THE INFORMATION I NEEDED.
THEATER DISTR
SLAYING
I COMMENCED THE PROGRAM.

I KEPT YOU UNCONSCIOUS FOR SIX WEEKS, TO LOSE THAT PERFECT MUSCLE TONE AND TO GIVE YOU MALNUTRITION. I KNEW THAT MAKE-UP WOULDN'T FOOL YOU, EVEN UNDER SEDATION.
I IMPLANTED CERTAIN POST-HYPNOTIC SUGGESTIONS.
THE DRIP KEPT YOU FED WITH SUPPRESSANTS AND SEDATIVES, THE SHOTS WERE MILD HALLUCINOGENS.
I HAVE IT ALL ON VIDEO.
I WAS GOING TO RELEASE THE MATERIAL TO THE PRESS AND TV NETWORKS, EXPOSING YOU ONCE AND FOR ALL...
...AFTER I'D COMPLETELY BROKEN YOU.
BUT YOU DIDN'T.
YOU FAILED.
SHUT YOUR MOUTH!
I'M ONLY TELLING YOU THIS NOW BECAUSE I'VE REALIZED THAT THE ONLY POSSIBLE CULMINATION OF MY REVENGE IS TO PERSONALLY EXECUTE YOU.
I'M GOING TO KILL YOU, BATMAN...
DELAYED LONG ENOUGH. I'M TAKING HIS GUN.
NOW!
BLAM
JENNY...?


KOFF
M-MAGGIE. NOT JENNY, MAGGIE.
I...I THINK I'M DYING. PLEASE F-FORGIVE ME...
PLEASE... GIVE ME ABSOLUTION.
I ONLY DID IT FOR THE MONEY... LOTS OF MONEY... HE PROMISED...
G-GUESS I'VE ALWAYS BEEN BROKE.
STUDENT NURSE...
FAILED ACTRESS...
MEDIOCRE HOOKER...
THEN GALLAGHER CAME ALONG...
XXX
SAID I WAS IDEAL FOR THE PART. TALKED ABOUT PAYING THOUSANDS.
I ONLY REALIZED HOW SERIOUS IT ALL WAS AFTER I'D STARTED.
AND YOU SAID I WAS A NICE PERSON...
...IT REALLY BROKE MY HEART.
TWO DAYS AGO, HE SAID HE MEANT TO KILL YOU...
...AND I STOPPED ADMINISTERING YOUR "MEDICATION."
IT... WAS PURE SELF-INTEREST...
KOFF KOFF
I KNEW HE WOULDN'T LET ME LIVE... KNOWING EVERYTHING AN' ALL...
...I WAS GOING TO RUN.
HE CAUGHT ME BURNING THE VIDEOS... EVIDENCE OF MY INVOLVEMENT.
I FORGIVE YOU, MAGGIE.
YOU SAVED ME.
WHEN YOU WERE CATWOMAN YOU LEFT A TEAR ON MY CHEEK. THAT WAS MY HOOK INTO REALITY. IT CONVINCED ME THAT I WAS EXPERIENCING SOMETHING REAL...

...THAT SOMETHING ELSE WAS REALLY GOING ON. MAGGIE?
BE AT PEACE.

I WATCH THE WARE-HOUSE BURN FOR A WHILE.
IT GIVES ME SOME KIND OF GRIM SATISFACTION.
FIRE: PURIFICATION. TRANSFORMATION. REBIRTH.
"DID YOU KNOW THAT THE WORD "PERSONA" ORIGINALLY MEANT "MASK"?
I DID, ACTUALLY.
BENEFIT OF A CLASSICAL EDUCATION.
I WILL NOT FALTER AGAIN.
I AM THE BATMAN.
FOREVER.
Gotham Gazette
BATMAN MISSING?
FIN

BATMAN

LEGENDS OF THE

DARK KNIGHT

50

EARLY SEPT 1993

BOLLAND

images

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:
A SPECIAL PREVIEW WORK FEATURING ART BY
RICHARD CORBEN, JOE LIA,
MIKE DEC & MANY OTHERS!

TM

Images

BEHIND THIS DOOR IS SOMETHING REALLY SERIOUSLY GORGEOUS--

--THE MOST BEAUTIFUL CREATURE IN THE ENTIRE WORLD--

--AND YOU ARE GOING TO SEE IT.

LUCKY.

LUCKY.

LUCKY.

YOU!

SO WE BEAT ON, BOATS AGAINST THE CURRENT, BORNE BACK CEASELESSLY INTO THE PAST.
--F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

Batman created by
BOB KANE.

Suggested by the work of
BILL FINGER *and* **BOB KANE.**

A tale from the early days by—
DENNIS O'NEIL
story
BRET BLEVINS
art
DIGITAL CHAMELEON
colors
WILLIE SCHUBERT
letters
GOODWIN & KAPLAN
editors

ISN'T.
HE.
JUST.
DARLING?
WHUZZIT, A MIRROR?
SOME KINDA GAG, RIGHT?
TODAY SPECIA
FOOD FOR THOUGHT
FUNNY AS A BROKEN CRUTCH, YOU ASK ME.
I HAPPEN TO THINK BROKEN CRUTCHES ARE *VERY* FUNNY!
EXTREMELY HUMOROUS, AS A MATTER OF FACT.
BUT ENOUGH OF THE AESTHETICS OF RISIBILITY. YOU'RE PROBABLY WONDERING--
Diner
--EXACTLY WHY I INVITED YOU GENTLE-MEN--
BISBEE DINER
NO TRESSPASSIN
--TO THIS LITTLE SOIRÉE.
SWA- WHAT?
IT IS BECAUSE YOU ARE ALL MAJOR MISCREANTS-- BIG-TIME CROOKS--AND WITH YOUR EXPERTISE AND MY GENIUS AND A LITTLE HELP FROM COUSIN MELVIN--

--AND THAT HEART-BREAKER IN THE MIRROR...

...OOOOO-- I LOVE HIM SO MUCH I COULD NIBBLE HIS EAR...

I'M GONNA PUKE.

WILL YOU GET ON WITH IT?

OH-*KAY!* IN A NUTSHELL. I HAVE A SCHEME TO MAKE US ALL RICH. EXTORTION LIKE THE WORLD HAS NEVER SEEN.

BIG BUCKS. LOADS OF LUCRE. LOTS OF LOOT.

DO I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION?

WE'RE LISTENING.

BUT NOT FOR LONG.

SPIT IT OUT.

FIRST, WE TELL THE WORLD WE'RE GONNA MURDER SOME BIG, FAT, RICH, DISGUSTING CITIZEN. THEN--

--THEN--WE DO IT. SNUFF HIS COOKIES. CANCEL HIS CHECK. MAKE HIM EX.

AND *THEN*-- HOLD ON FOR THE BEAUTY PART--WE TELL ANOTHER CITIZEN WE'LL DO HIM LIKEWISE UNLESS HE COUGHS UP THE GELT.

FOR *THIS* WE COME OUT INNA COLD?

MY OLD MAN WORKED THAT RACKET FORTY YEARS AGO.

AN' IT HAD WHISKERS THEN.

Ah, BUT WE'LL DO IT WITH *PANACHE!* LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND BEHOLD THE FUTURE OF CRIME--

KHEE-EE-EE-E

WHO THE HELL?

WHO CARES WHO THE HELL?

YEAH. WHOEVER HE IS--

--HE AIN'T OURS!

EXCELLENT. I'D GIVE IT NINE POINTS OUT OF A POSSIBLE TEN.

VERY IMPRESSIVE! ANOTHER NINE.

BLAM BLAM BLAM

BLAM BLAM

Tch Tch. USE OF CHAIR-- DEDUCT FIVE POINTS.

BAM

I'M AFRAID I'VE GOT TO GIVE THAT ANOTHER NINE.

LET IT END.

TODAY'S SPECIAL

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

WHAT-- ARE YA SCARED'A ME?

NO.

A RATHER BORING PUNCH. NO STYLE. NO ELAN. NOT WORTH A BIT MORE THAN SIX-POINT-FIVE.

I CONFESS I *AM* A TRIFLE DISAPPOINTED.

WE'VE MET?

I DON'T THINK SO. I WOULD PROBABLY HAVE REMEMBERED.

WHO ARE YOU?

I AM... ah... ah...

...A POOR CIRCUS CLOWN KIDNAPPED BY THOSE FELONS FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING CRUEL ENTERTAINMENT!

YES, INDEEDY. THAT IS *EXACTLY* WHO I AM.

AND THEY SHALL HAVE IT AS SOON AS I PHONE MISTER MELVIN.

HE'S MY BOSS.

ONE HECK OF A TROOPER, THAT MISTER MELVIN.

THE POLICE WILL WANT YOUR STATEMENT.

I'VE FINALLY NAILED YOU, CAL.

Uhnnn...

YEH? HOW'D YOU DO THAT?

TELL YOUR PALS TO BE CAREFUL WHO THEY TALK TO.

YEH? WELL, YOU AIN'T SO SMART. YOU LET THE JOKER SPLIT.

THE... JOKER?

IT MIGHT BE ME.

AND HOW ARE WE COMING, COUSIN MELVIN--

--YOU WALKING HUNK OF IDIOT-SAVANT GENIUS YOU?

PRETTY GOOD, COUSIN JA--

The HAPPY CAMPER TRAILER PARK

Shhhhhhhh...

WE DON'T USE THAT NAME ANYMORE, REMEMBER? I'M COUSIN JOKER NOW.

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN READING?

HOW SORDID! FRANKLY, MEL, I EXPECTED BETTER OF YOU.

BOYS AND GIRLS OWN MAGAZINE

IT'S BEEN MY FAVORITE EVER SINCE I WAS SIX. I'VE GOT MY OWN SUBSCRIPTION AND EVERYTHING.

ENOUGH LITERARY CHITCHAT. WHAT ABOUT YOUR LITTLE EXPERIMENT?

AS SOON AS THE CHLORIDES BOND WITH THE HYDROCOLLOID DERIVATIVE...

BEE-YOU-TI-FUL. TRULY, DEEPLY LOVELY. I MEAN THAT WITH EVERY VENTRICLE OF MY HEART.

I DUNNO, COUSIN JA--JOKER. BACK HOME, THEY SAID IT WAS EVIL. I WAS EVIL FOR MAKING IT.

THERE!

WHAT DO THEY KNOW--THE PHILISTINES, FOOLS, FRUMPS, FEEBS,,,THE FRACTIOUS FOISTERS OF FULSOME FOLLY.

GO TAKE A WALK. ENJOY THE NIGHT AIR. REWARD YOURSELF--PICK A DAISY.

I GOTTA FEED MUFFIN--

NOT TO WORRY. I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE KITTY.

AMSCRAY. PICK TWO DAISIES.

BUT MY PROBLEM--

--YOU SAID IF I MADE THE STUFF FOR YOU, YOU'D HELP ME WITH MY... MY...

...SMALL PROBLEM...

YOUR HIDEOUS GHASTLY REVOLTING NAUSEATING UGLINESS? THAT PROBLEM?

UH HUH.

YOU STILL BELIEVE WHAT YOUR MOTHER TOLD YOU? ABOUT HOW DEFORMED AND GNARLY AND YUKKY YOU ARE.

MOMS DON'T LIE.

--WHO END THEIR DAYS IN THE COUNTY LOONY BIN, WHICH IS WHAT MY AUNTIE-POO-- YOUR *MUTHAH*-- WAS.

LISTEN, MEL, I DON'T CARE IF YOU BELIEVE HER OR NOT. IN FACT, I WOULDN'T CARE--

--IF YOU WERE AS SICKENING AS YOU THINK YOU ARE.

YOU WOULDN'T?

THEY DO IF THEY'RE RAVING TWISTIES--

YOU AND ME--WE'RE *FAMILY*. WE'RE ALL WE'VE GOT. I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU. I'LL EVEN PAY FOR PLASTIC SURGERY IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT.

YOU'D DO THAT FOR ME?

TAKE IT TO THE BANK, PAL.

NOW SHOO.

NICE MUFFIN... GOT A TREAT FOR YOU. LITTLE YUMMERS NUMMERS FOR YOUR MILK.

NOW WHERE'S THAT TAPE RECORDER...?

AH, HERE.

SHALL I GO FOR HUMOR OR STARK DRAMA?

I'M FEELING *POETIC*--

ATTENTION: TUESDAY NIGHT AT PRECISELY EIGHT, I'LL MAKE HENRY HAIGHT--

--THE *LATE* HENRY HAIGHT--

CATCH A LIFT, CAPTAIN?

OKAY, SERGEANT. GET IN.

HOW FAR YOU GOING, SERGEANT?

AS FAR AS IT TAKES--

--FOR YOU TO TELL ME WHAT YOU WANTED TO SEE ME ABOUT.

YOU!

HOW'D YOU CHANGE CLOTHES SO FAST? I ONLY LOOKED AWAY FOR A SECOND--

PRACTICE. YOUR PROBLEM?

REMEMBER I TOLD YOU ABOUT SOME NUT CASE WHO THREATENED TO POISON THE RESERVOIR? WE HEARD FROM HIM AGAIN. HE SENT A TAPE TO HENRY HAIGHT.

THE BANKER?

THE SAME. I HAVE A DUPE ON THIS MACHINE.

--MAKE HENRY THE LATE MISTER HAIGHT, AND THAT'S HIS FATE! THE JOKER SAY IT.

THAT LAST RHYME'S LOUSY.

I'M TALKING TO MYSELF AGAIN.

I HATE IT WHEN HE DOES THAT.

--VOICE WAS UNMISTAKABLE, ALFRED.

IT WAS THE CLOWN I SPOKE TO THE OTHER NIGHT. AND I KNOW I'VE HEARD IT SOMEWHERE ELSE. BUT WHERE?

I THOUGHT YOU WERE BORN WITH AN EIDETIC MEMORY, MASTER BRUCE.

NOT BORN WITH. ACQUIRED. BUT THE VOICE ISN'T *EXACTLY* THE SAME...

...THAT'S WHY I'M HAVING TROUBLE PLACING IT.

ANY PLANS?

YES. HAIGHT IS SCHEDULED TO SPEAK AT THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FUND RAISER TONIGHT.

I HADN'T PLANNED TO ATTEND. I'VE CHANGED MY MIND.

IF ANYTHING HAPPENS AT LEAST I'LL BE PRESENT, BUT I'M HOPING GORDON CAN PERSUADE HAIGHT TO DIVE INTO A HOLE--AND PULL IT IN AFTER HIM.

ABSOLUTELY NOT!

HENRY HAIGHT DIDN'T GET TO WHERE HE IS TODAY BY RUNNING *SCARED*. IF HENRY HAIGHT SAID HE'LL SPEAK, THEN, BY *THUNDER*, SPEAK HE WILL!

BESIDES, I PAID SOME FELLA FORTY DOLLARS--

--TO WRITE MY SPEECH. HE SAID I'LL NEVER READ ANYTHING THIS FUNNY AGAIN.

FOR THAT KIND OF MONEY HE BETTER BE RIGHT.

IF YOU SAY SO, MISTER HAIGHT.

EVERYTHING SET?

DOORS, WINDOWS AND VENTILATION DUCTS SEALED.

THE BOMB SQUAD TOOK EVERY PIECE OF FURNITURE APART AND USED DETECTORS ON THE FLOOR BOARDS.

"EVERY GUEST HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED BY AT LEAST TWO OF THE DINNER'S ORGANIZERS, AND THERE ARE TWENTY COPS SCATTERED AROUND THE ROOM. THE FOOD'S BEEN PREPARED BY--

--POLICE DEPARTMENT CHEFS, AND--

--ANYWAY, HAIGHT IS ON A DIET AND ISN'T EATING ANYTHING. YEAH, I KNOW.

I'VE PERSONALLY CHECKED THE MICROPHONE AND THE AREA AROUND THE PODIUM.

THERE'S NO WAY THIS JOKER CHARACTER CAN GET TO HAIGHT...

...AT LEAST NOT TONIGHT.

A. FUNNY. THING. HAPPENED. TO. ME. ON. THE. WAY. DOWN. HERE. TO. NIGHT. A. BUM. ASKED. ME. FOR. FIFTY. DOLLARS. FOR. A. CUP. OF. COFFEE.

HEM.

I. TOLD. HIM. COFFEE. IS. ONLY. FIFTY. CENTS. HE. SAID. I. AM.

HEE

A. BIG. TIPPER.

HEE

HEE HEE

HEE HEE HEE

HEEEEEEEEEEE

HENRY!!

--DEAD BEFORE HE HIT THE FLOOR.

THE PAPER YOU'RE EXAMINING WAS THE MURDER WEAPON?

YES. HIS SPEECH. I SNAGGED IT IN MY HANDKERCHIEF WHILE EVERYONE WAS TENDING TO HENRY.

BUT WHAT POISON? IT'S NOTHING I'VE EVER SEEN...

IT'S COATED WITH POISON... APPARENTLY ACTIVATED THROUGH BODY HEAT AND INTRODUCED INTO THE BLOOD THROUGH THE SKIN.

...SOME STRANGE COMPOUND OF CHLORIDES AND HYDROCOLLOIDS WITH A PROTEIN CATALYST.

WAYNE INDUSTRIES HAS JUST BECOME INTERESTED IN CHLORIDES AND HYDROCOLLOIDS. I'LL GET SOMEBODY STARTED SEARCHING THE LITERATURE TOMORROW.

AND TONIGHT?

I'LL STAY DOWN HERE AND THINK.

BEGGING YOUR PARDON, MASTER BRUCE--

--YOU WILL NOT *THINK*. UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS, YOU WILL *BROOD*. YOU WILL BLAME YOURSELF FOR HENRY HAIGHT'S DEATH.

I *HAD* THE JOKER... AND I LET HIM WALTZ AWAY. SO WHO *SHOULD* I BLAME?

HIM. THE JOKER. HE *IS* THE MURDERER, YOU KNOW!

HEH HEH HEH HEH HEH

COMPARED TO OL' HENRY--

--A DOORNAIL IS AS LIVELY AS SEVEN LORDS A' LEAPING

OR MAYBE LURCHING.

LOLLYGAGGING?

BANKER SLAIN

NICE THAT YOU FELLAS MADE BAIL.

NOW, TO BUSINESS--DO YOU LOVE HOW I GAVE HAIGHT THOSE KILLER GAGS, OR DO YOU LOVE IT?

SHOWED A LOTTA CLASS.

YOU STILL WANT PARTNERS, I'M IN.

ME TOO.

GOODY GOODY GOODY.

I HAVE OUR NEXT VICTIM ALL PICKED OUT.

YOU GONNA DO HIM THE SAME WAY?

A TRUE ARTIST NEVER REPEATS HIMSELF.

BUT I WILL USE THE JOKER VENOM AGAIN 'CAUSE I ADORE IT.

SPEAKIN' OF THAT... WHERE'S THE GENIUS?

"MELVIN? HE'S OUT LOOKING FOR A LOST FRIEND."

HERE, KITTY KITTY KITTY...

"VERY LOST."

YOU HERE?

YES I AM, CAPTAIN.

DO ME A FAVOR--STAY HERE UNTIL WE'RE FINISHED.

I ALWAYS DO. I JUST DON'T STAY ONE SECOND LONGER.

YOU'VE HEARD FROM THE JOKER AGAIN?

YEAH. HE'S PROMISED ANOTHER KILLING. THIS CAME IN THE MAIL TODAY. IT SAYS HE'LL MURDER GEORGE PARTRIDGE AT EXACTLY EIGHT TOMORROW NIGHT.

ANY SUGGESTIONS?

GUARD HIM.

YOU WANT TO BE THERE? IN ONE OF YOUR DISGUISES, MAYBE?

NO. I'M GOING AT IT FROM ANOTHER ANGLE.

MAY I HAVE YOUR PERMISSION TO LEAVE?

CAPTAIN, ONE MORE THING...

WHAT IS IT?

EVERYTHING SET?

THIS TIME HE AIN'T GONNA DO IT, SIR. FOR OPENERS--

"-- WE GOT SQUAD CARS BUMPER TO BUMPER AROUND THE BLOCK AND A MOVIE COMPANY LENT US SOME SPOTLIGHTS TO SHINE ON THE BUILDING.

51

"WE GOT A S.W.A.T. TEAM ON THE ROOF--

"-- AND ANOTHER IN THE SEWER BELOW US."

"WE GOT TWO MORE IN THE BANK ITSELF--"

--AND HERE IN THE VAULT WE GOT EIGHT OF OUR BEST MEN WITH TOMMY GUNS. I TELL YA, MISTER PARTRIDGE IS SAFE AS BONDS.

LET'S HOPE SO.

ONE MINUTE TO EIGHT.

THIRTY SECONDS.

IS IT EIGHT YET?

ONE MINUTE PAST.

LOOKS LIKE WE MADE IT, MISTER PARTRIDGE. OF COURSE, WE'LL KEEP AN EYE ON YOU FOR A FEW DAYS, BUT--

I FEEL--WEE-- POSITIVELY OVER--WEE WEE--JOYED--

I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW RELIEVED I AM, CAPTAIN.

NO!

HE'S GONE.

CAPTAIN... ONE MORE THING...

YES?

I THINK YOUR WATCH IS A MINUTE FAST.

--CAPTAIN GORDON? YOU KNOW WHO THIS IS?

BATMAN. YOU HEARD ABOUT PARTRIDGE?

THE MEDICAL EXAMINER WILL FIND A PUNCTURE MARK SOMEWHERE ON PARTRIDGE'S BODY. THE JOKER INJECTED THE POISON INTO HIS VICTIM *BEFORE* YOU LOCKED HIM IN THAT VAULT.

PROBABLY WHILE HE WAS SLEEPING.

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

GOTHAM GAZETTE

LOCKED ROOM MURDER

POLICE BAFFLED

"HE'S DEAD, JIM!"

BECAUSE THAT'S THE WAY IT HAD TO BE.

ANY PARTICULAR DESTINATION, MASTER BRUCE?

THE HAPPY CAMPER TRAILER PARK IN SOUTH GOTHAM.

WHY THERE?

MY RESEARCHERS FOUND SOMEONE WHO WAS WORKING ON HYDROCOLLOIDS AND PROTEINS--

--A YOUNG NEW JERSEY MAN NAMED MELVIN REIPAN... AN IDIOT SAVANT-- THE MIND OF AN EIGHT-YEAR-OLD IN EVERYTHING--

--EXCEPT CHEMISTRY. IN THAT, HE MAY HAVE NO PEER ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD.

HE LEFT THE PEOPLE HE WAS STAYING WITH SUDDENLY, WITHOUT TELLING ANYONE WHERE HE WENT. BUT--

--HE HAS A SUBSCRIPTION TO THIS MAGAZINE AND HE HAD IT FORWARDED TO THE TRAILER PARK ADDRESS.

BOY'S AND GIRL'S OWN MAGAZINE

BRILLIANT DETECTIVE WORK, SIR.

NOT REALLY. A COUPLE OF PHONE CALLS. ROUTINE.

THE BRILLIANCE IS IN KNOWING *WHICH* ROUTINE CALLS TO MAKE--

ALFRED--

--THE PICKUP WITH THE TRAILER--

--I'M PRETTY SURE MELVIN REIPAN WAS DRIVING.

AFTER IT!

SCREEE

DINGDINGDING-- *DARN!*

WHAT'SA MATTER, COUSIN?

THAT LIMO JUST MADE THE DEVIL'S OWN ILLEGAL TURN.

LIMOUSINE DRIVERS DON'T *DO* THAT UNLESS THEY'RE CHASING SOMEONE.

TAKE THE OFF-RAMP!

THEY'RE LEAVING THE BRIDGE--

KEEP GOING-- FAST! BEFORE SOMEONE CONNECTS THIS CAR TO--

--WHAT HAPPENS NEXT!

KRHEESH!

GIVE IT UP.

COUSIN... YOU'RE GONNA KILL US!

IF WE DIE--

--AT LEAST HE DIES WITH US!

TH-RAWST!

T-KRAZZTCH!

SPLOOSH!

--CRASHED THROUGH THE PIER AND INTO THE RIVER. A POLICE LAUNCH HAPPENED TO BE NEARBY SO THERE WAS NO POINT IN MY LOOKING--

--FOR THE JOKER AND MELVIN. IF THEY'D BEEN THERE, THE POLICE DIVERS WOULD HAVE FOUND THEM.

I TAKE IT THE AQUATIC OFFICERS FAILED.

THEY CAME UP EMPTY-HANDED, YES.

SO THE FIEND MAY STILL BE ALIVE.

MAY I INQUIRE AS TO WHAT YOU ARE DOING WITH YOUR GLOVE?

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING THAT ISN'T THERE.

THEN PERHAPS YOU SHOULD USE A MAGNIFYING GLASS WITHOUT A LENS.

CAPTAIN. YOU KNOW WHO THIS IS?

I'M GLAD YOU CALLED. WE FOUND HIM--

--ABOUT FOUR MILES DOWNRIVER FROM WHERE THE TRUCK WENT INTO THE RIVER.

HIS FACE MUST HAVE BEEN DAMAGED IN THE CRASH... OR THE CURRENT SMASHED IT AGAINST ROCKS...

NOT PRETTY. BUT--

--DEATH NEVER IS.

ANYWAY, I GUESS THE CASE--

--IS CLOSED.

HE DID IT AGAIN.

WITHOUT ASKING PER-MISSION.

WHO TURNED OUT THE LIGHTS?

WHO'S THERE?

I DON'T HAVE THE MONEY YET! YOU SAID YOU'D GIVE ME TWO DAYS!

DON'T WORRY, OTTO DREXEL. I'M NOT HERE TO HARM YOU. I'M NOT THE MAN WHO SAID YOU'D DIE UNLESS YOU PAID A QUARTER OF A MILLION.

HOW DID YOU KNOW--?

--YOU'RE TRYING TO BUY YOUR SAFETY.

YES, YES... WHAT DO YOU WANT?

TO BUY THE NECKLACE.

YOU PUT THE CLEOPATRA NECKLACE ON THE MARKET FOR TWO HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND. IT'S WORTH TWICE THAT. YOU HAVE NO OUTSTANDING DEBTS OR FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS. THEREFORE--

--SIMPLY GAVE HIM ALL THAT MONEY WITHOUT EVEN TAKING THE JEWELRY, MASTER BRUCE?

I TRIED THE NECKLACE ON. IT CLASHED WITH MY MASK.

SO MISTER DREXEL IS BEING VICTIMIZED BY WHOEVER HAS TAKEN OVER THE JOKER'S CRIMINAL SCHEME?

THERE IS NO "WHOEVER," ALFRED. THE JOKER HIMSELF IS GOING AFTER DREXEL.

BUT HE'S--

DEAD? NO. THE CORPSE WAS WEARING WHITE MAKEUP. THE JOKER DOESN'T--THE PASTY COMPLEXION IS HIS OWN.

I HIT HIM IN THE JAW. LATER, WHEN I EXAMINED THE GLOVE, THERE WAS NO TRACE OF COSMETIC ON IT.

HOW NICE. YOU WEREN'T JUST PLAYING WITH YOUR TOYS.

I PRESUME YOU HAVE A PLAN?

A RATHER ELABORATE ONE. FIRST, I HAVE SOME WORK TO DO ON THIS CASE, AND THEN--

--I THINK I'LL CHANGE MY IMAGE.

READY, FREDDY?

I TOLE YA, I AIN'T FREDDY. I'M *LOU*. BUT YEAH, WE'RE ALL SET. MY BOYS'RE IN PLACE AND SO'RE JIMMY'S.

HOW ABOUT GIVING ME A PLAY-BY-PLAY?

OKAY. THE TRUCK'S SLOWIN'--

--AN' DREXEL'S TOSSIN' THE CASE WITH THE PAYMENT IN BACK--

--JUST LIKE WE TOLD HIM TO.

AN' NOW THEY'RE PULLIN' THE SEMI OUT. THAT TAKES CARE OF ANYBODY WHO'S FOLLOWIN'.

NOW JIMMY'S GUY IS PUTTIN' THE CASE ON THE ROPE FROM THE CHOPPER.

AN NOW THE CHOPPER'S COMIN' TO GET ME.

YOU! WHO INVITED YOU?

THERE YOU SEE IT-- EXACTLY WHAT IS WRONG WITH THIS COUNTRY! NO TRUST!

YOU THINK I'M GONNA LET THE MONEY GO SOMEPLACE WITHOUT ME?

THERE'S THE CHOPPER-- RIGHT ON SCHEDULE.

WANNA COUNT IT?

INDEEDY I DO.

LOVELY, LOVELY. LIKE THE FELLA SAYS, MONEY CAN'T BUY FRIENDS, BUT IT GIVES YOU A BETTER CLASS OF ENEMIES.

BUT WHAT IS THIS?

A BUG? COULD IT BE--

A TINY TRANSMITTER DESIGNED TO LEAD TO MY CAPTURE AND EVENTUAL INCARCERA-TION?

HERE! FLY AWAY WITH IT. DUMP IT INTO THE GOTHAM RIVER. LET THE FUZZ ARREST THE FISH!

Hmpf!

IMAGINE--TRYING TO TRAP ME WITH SUCH A TRIFLE! I WOULD BE INSULTED IF I WASN'T SO BUSY BEING DISGUSTED.

WELL, IF THE BUG PLANTER WAS THAT BATMAN--HE'S BEAT.

IF IT WAS THE LAW--

HAW HAW HAW

I RECOGNIZE YOUR VOICE NOW. IT'S DAMAGED, BUT I'M SURE--

--YOU'RE THE SO-CALLED RED HOOD--

"--THE THUG WHO FELL INTO AN ACID BATH AT THE CHEMICAL REFINERY A FEW MONTHS AGO. WE NEVER RECOVERED THE BODY--

--AND NOW I KNOW WHY.

OKAY, THAT'S *ME*--SORT OF, IN A WAY, ONCE UPON A TIME. NOW IT'S *YOUR* TURN TO SHOW AND TELL.

WE CAN'T GO ON MEETING LIKE THIS.

YOU!

WHERE'S LOU?

LAST I SAW HIM, HE WAS IN GORDON'S OFFICE MAKING A DEAL WITH THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY.

HE SAID I COULD BORROW HIS FACE AND HE TOLD ME JUST WHERE TO GO WITH IT.

YOU REMEMBERED HIM FROM THE *DINER*, DIDN'T YOU?

AREN'T YOU THE SLY BOOTS?

I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU.

THEN WE *DO* HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON.

OH, JOY.

BEFORE YOU HAUL MY TAIL OFF TO THE SLAMMER--

--LARE FOR A WHIFF?

NO.

"A RATHER BORING PUNCH. NO STYLE. NO ELAN. NOT WORTH A BIT MORE THAN SIX-POINT-FIVE."

TAKE THAT!

SIX-POINT-FIVE? THAT WAS A PERFECT TEN!

NO--

--THAT WAS A TEN!

--SHOULDN'T HAVE HIT HIM THAT HARD.

I BEG TO DIFFER. YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE HIT HIM THAT HARD *ONCE*. YOU SHOULD HAVE HIT HIM THAT HARD ABOUT FORTY TIMES.

THE MAN IS A FIEND.

NO ARGUMENT.

STOP HERE, ALFRED.

QUITE IMPRESSIVE, MASTER BRUCE. BUT I CONFESS TO BEING BAFFLED AS TO WHY YOU FELT YOU HAD TO PROVIDE A LAVISH BURIAL FOR SOMEONE--

--YOU NEVER REALLY MET.

MELVIN REIPAN

I FELT RESPONSIBLE. AFTER ALL, THE JOKER DISGUISED AND MURDERED HIS COUSIN TO THROW ME OFF HIS TRAIL--

-AND IF I HADN'T LET THE JOKER GO AT THE DINER...

THAT WAS NOT YOUR FAULT. AS I HAVE SAID. REPEATEDLY.

ANYWAY, WE CAN TAKE COMFORT IN ONE THING.

AND THAT IS?

WE'LL NEVER HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THE JOKER AGAIN.

END

BATMAN
LEGENDS OF THE
DARK KNIGHT
NO 52 EARLY OCT 93
TAO
ONE OF TWO
ALAN GRANT &
ARTHUR
Andrew Ranson

TAO
PART ONE: BAT
"The Tao that can be told is not the true Tao"
–Lao Tzu.
ALAN GRANT
script
ARTHUR RANSON
art
DIGITAL CHAMELEON
color
WILLIE SCHUBERT
letters
BILL KAPLAN
associate editor
ARCHIE GOODWIN
editor
BATMAN created by
BOB KANE

HONG GUNG REST.
BAR
MANDARIN
Temple
D PING
STAURANT

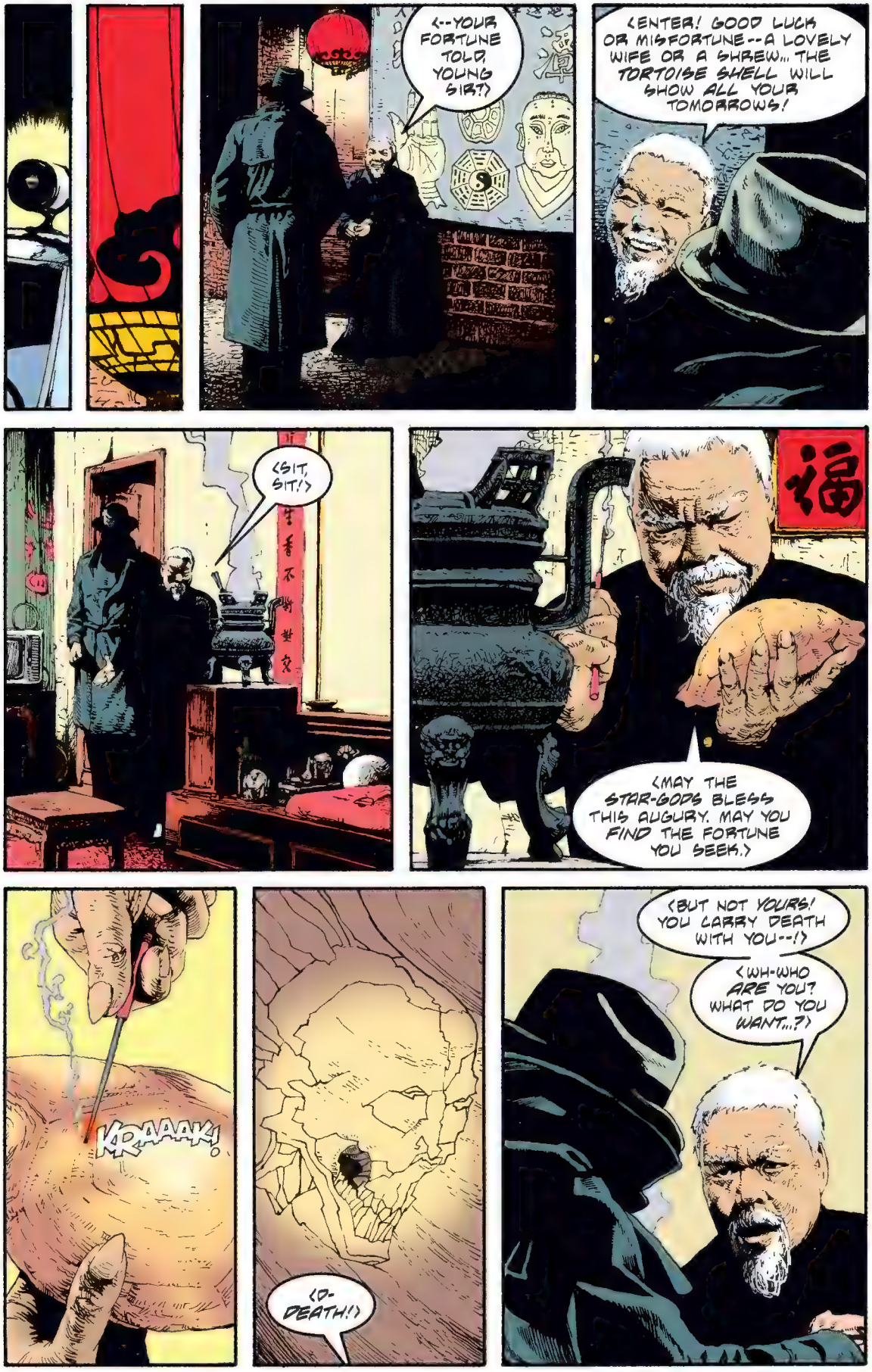
〈Ahh... GOOD EVENING! DO YOU WISH TO GAMBLE? YOU ARE MEMBERS...?〉
〈SILENCE HIM!〉

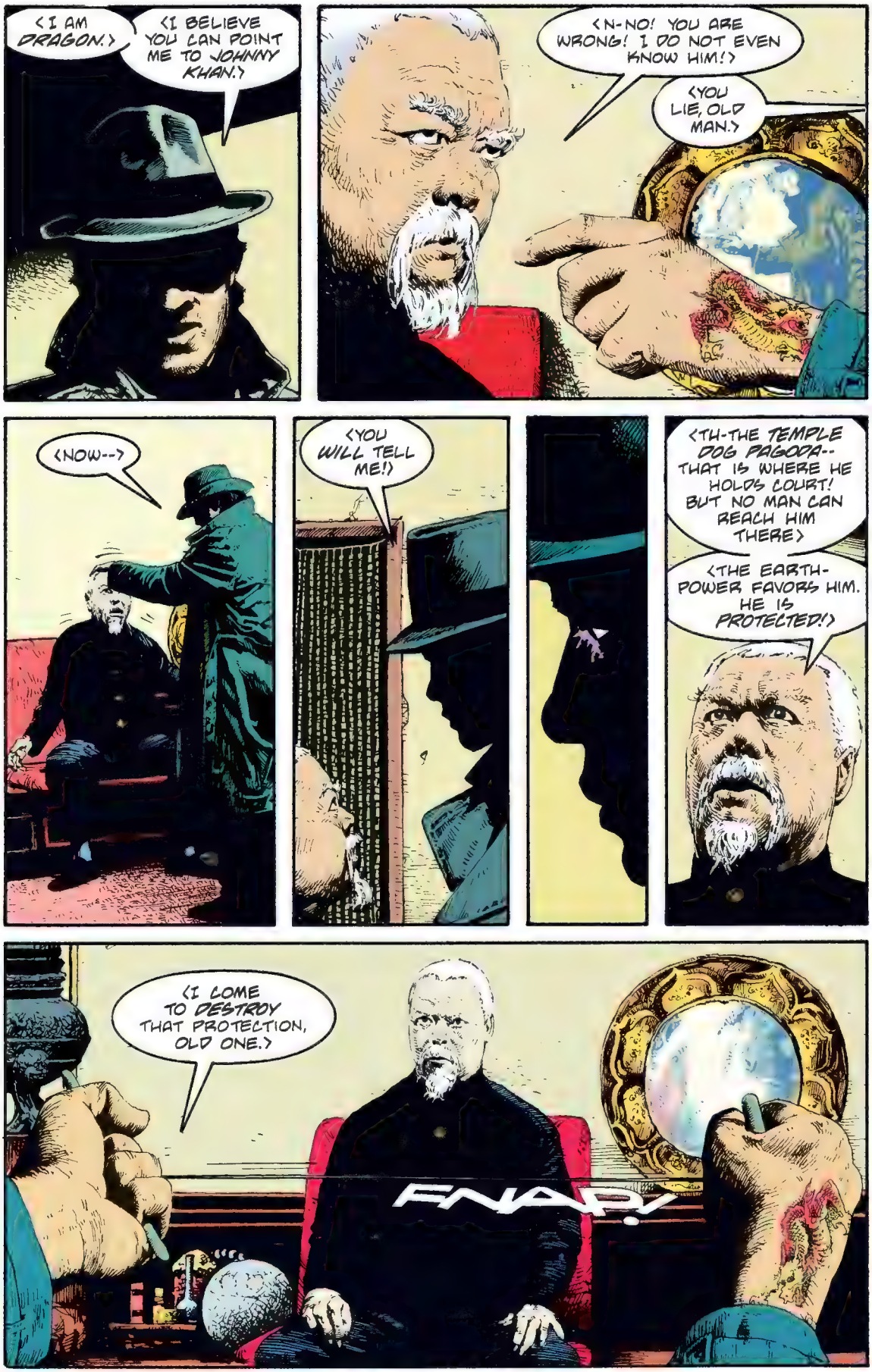
WOMP!

〈WHAT IN THE NAME--?〉
〈LO WEN SHO!〉
〈WE HAVE COME TO COLLECT YOUR GAMBLING TAX.〉
〈NO! I HAVE A LICENSE--I PAY THE CITY!〉
〈GO BACK TO YOUR MASTER. TELL HIM LO WEN SHO DOES NOT BOW BEFORE THUGS AND GANGSTERS!〉
〈THEN YOUR HEAD ROLLS, FOOL--!〉
THWIT!
〈WHAT--?〉

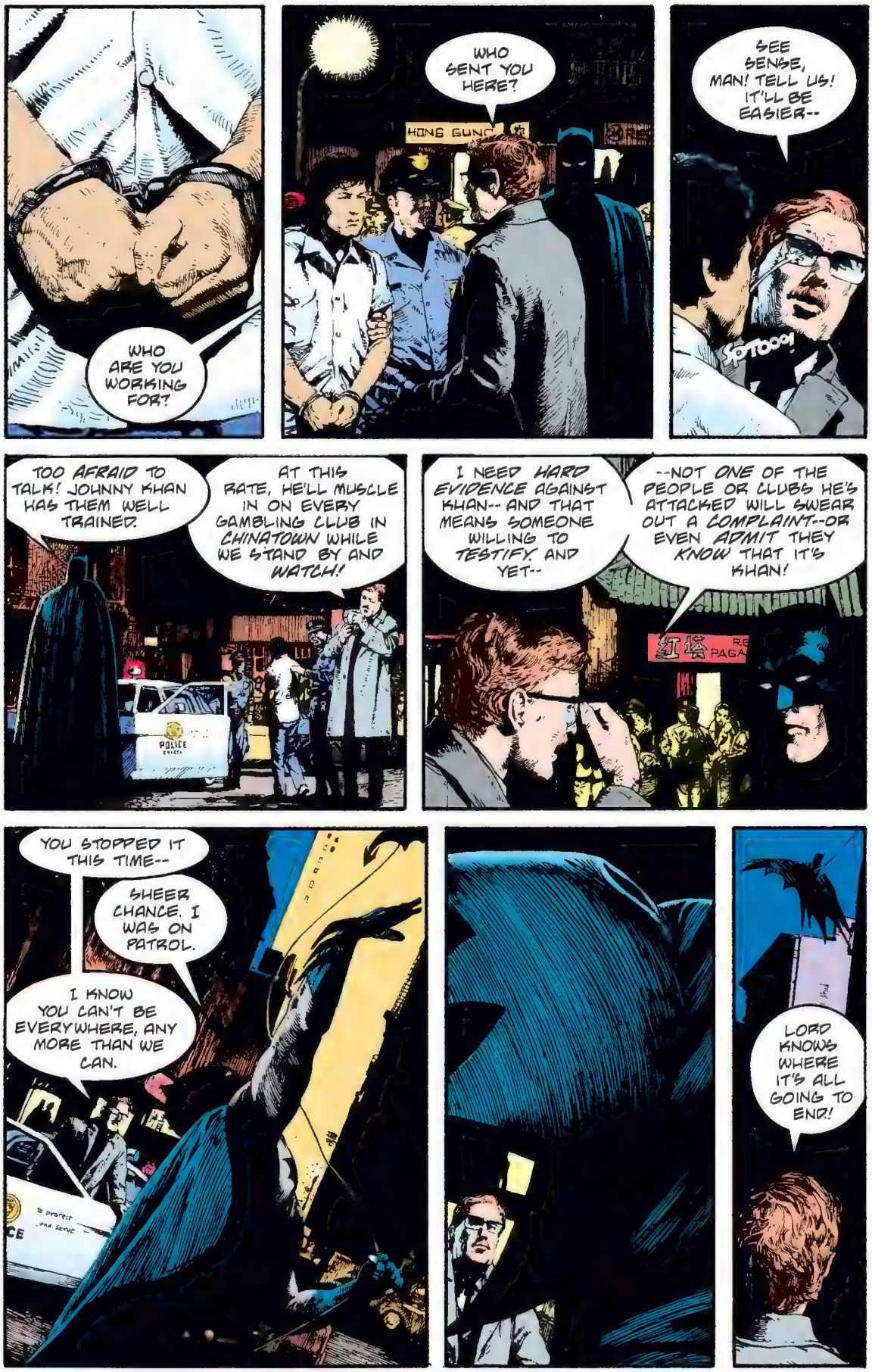
<THE BAT!>
YOU MEN ARE UNDER ARREST. COME QUIETLY, OR IT'LL GO WORSE FOR YOU!
BLAM!
Too many innocents inside. I have to draw them outside.
<KILL HIM!>
They'll know how to fight. Johnny Khan doesn't hire losers.
<HE'S MINE!>
CRAK!
UNNNGH!
UFF!
WUKK!

BLAM!
WHAM!
THUNK!
THAK!
OUFFF!
CRACK!
THUM!
DRUGS
PEKING GARDEN
RESTAURANT
POLICE


<--YOUR FORTUNE TOLD, YOUNG SIR?>
<ENTER! GOOD LUCK OR MISFORTUNE--A LOVELY WIFE OR A SHREW... THE TORTOISE SHELL WILL SHOW ALL YOUR TOMORROWS!
<SIT, SIT!>
福
<MAY THE STAR-GODS BLESS THIS AUGURY. MAY YOU FIND THE FORTUNE YOU SEEK.>
KRAAAAK!
<D-DEATH!>
<BUT NOT YOURS! YOU CARRY DEATH WITH YOU--!>
<WH-WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU WANT...?>

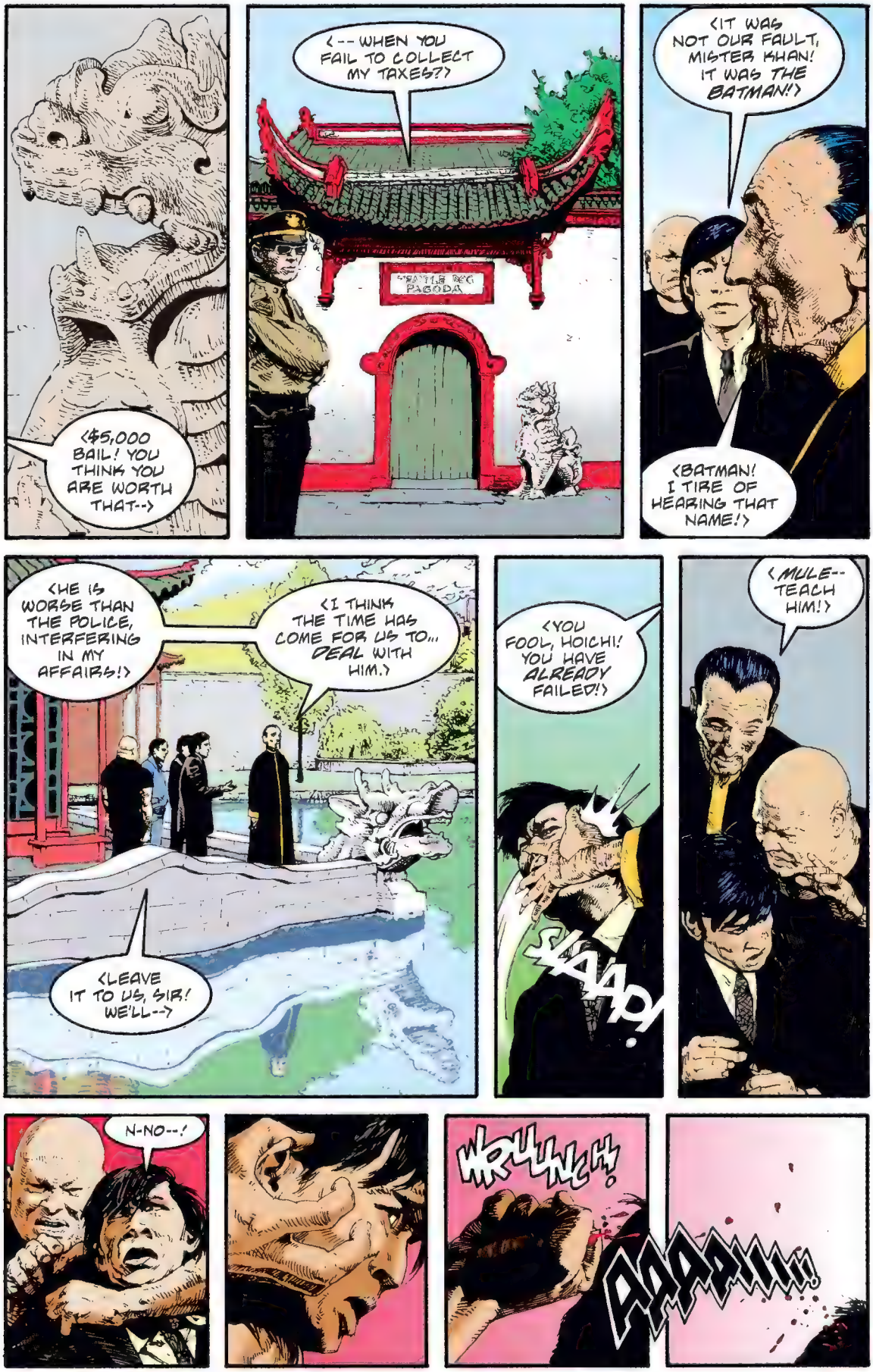

<I AM DRAGON.>
<I BELIEVE YOU CAN POINT ME TO JOHNNY KHAN.>
<N-NO! YOU ARE WRONG! I DO NOT EVEN KNOW HIM!>
<YOU LIE, OLD MAN.>
<NOW-->
<YOU WILL TELL ME!>
<TH-THE TEMPLE DOG PAGODA-- THAT IS WHERE HE HOLDS COURT! BUT NO MAN CAN REACH HIM THERE>
<THE EARTH-POWER FAVORS HIM. HE IS PROTECTED!>
<I COME TO DESTROY THAT PROTECTION, OLD ONE.>
FNAP!

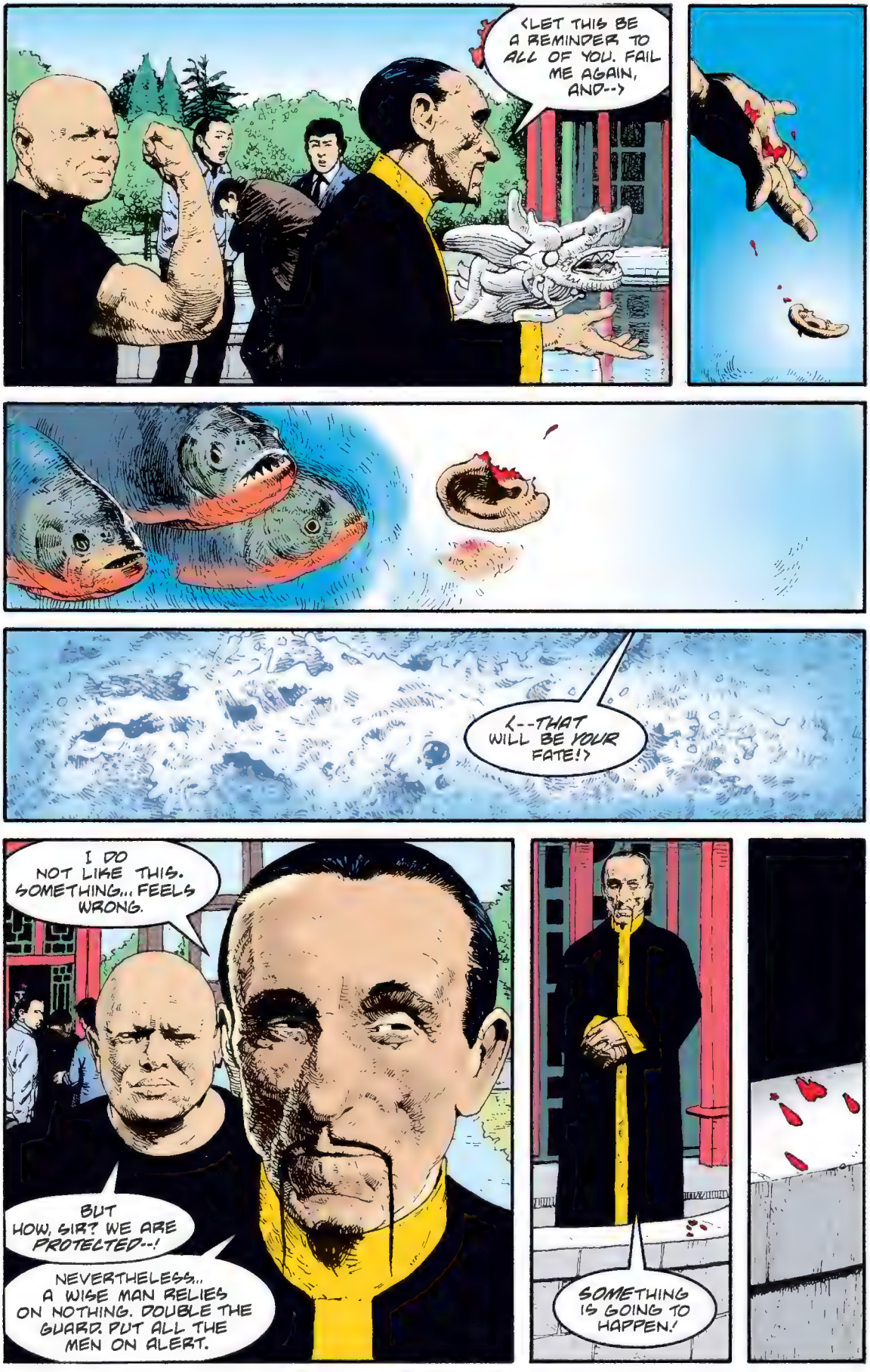
〈YOU WILL HELP ME.〉
LET THE MIRROR ANCHOR YOU--
BIND YOUR GHOST--
TIE IT FOREVER TO THIS SPOT!
海
洪
海

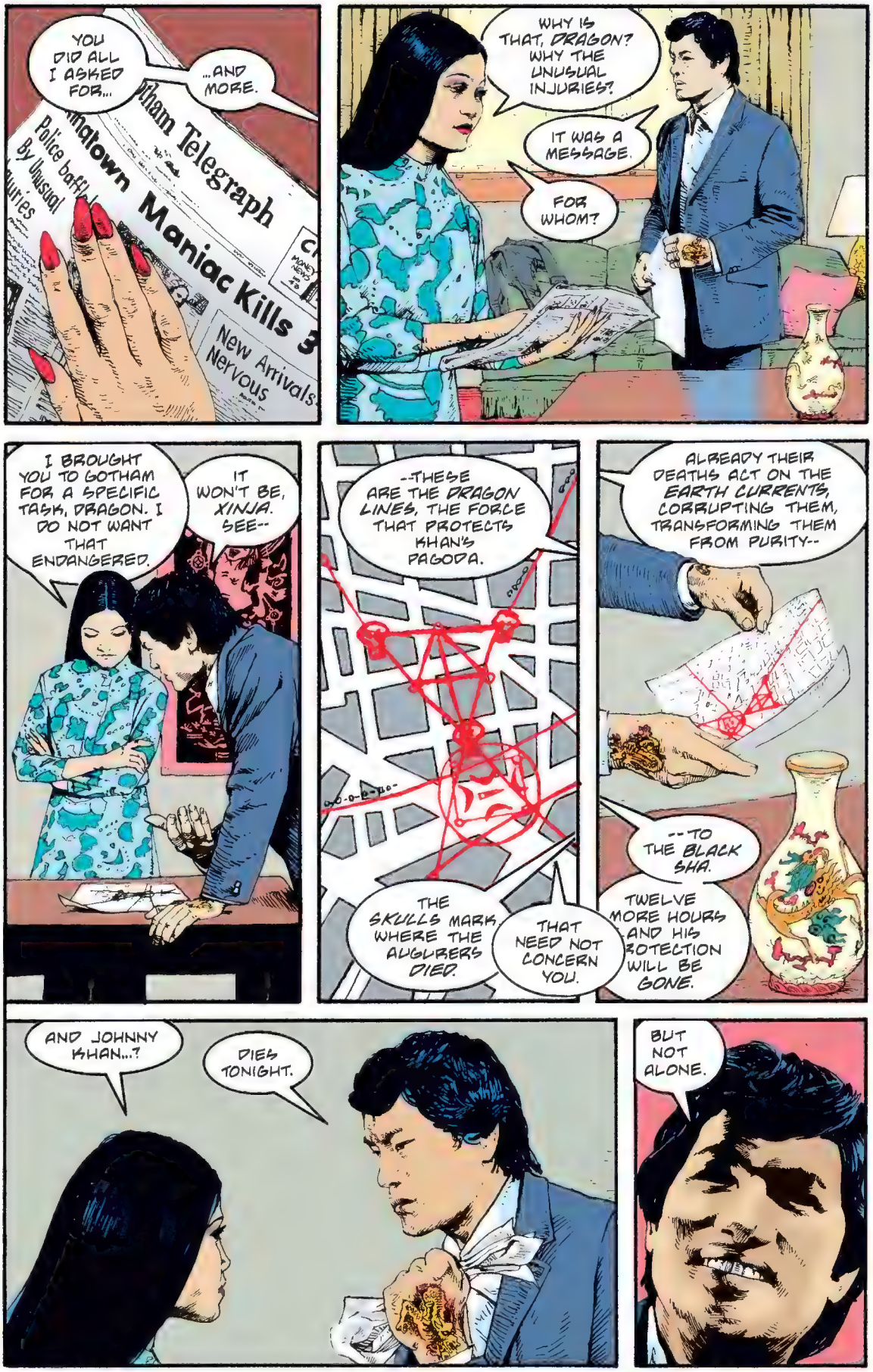

WHO ARE YOU WORKING FOR?
WHO SENT YOU HERE?
HONG GUNG
SEE SENSE, MAN! TELL US! IT'LL BE EASIER--
SPTOOO!
TOO AFRAID TO TALK! JOHNNY KHAN HAS THEM WELL TRAINED.
AT THIS RATE, HE'LL MUSCLE IN ON EVERY GAMBLING CLUB IN CHINATOWN WHILE WE STAND BY AND WATCH!
POLICE
I NEED HARD EVIDENCE AGAINST KHAN-- AND THAT MEANS SOMEONE WILLING TO TESTIFY. AND YET--
--NOT ONE OF THE PEOPLE OR CLUBS HE'S ATTACKED WILL SWEAR OUT A COMPLAINT--OR EVEN ADMIT THEY KNOW THAT IT'S KHAN!
YOU STOPPED IT THIS TIME--
SHEER CHANCE. I WAS ON PATROL.
I KNOW YOU CAN'T BE EVERYWHERE, ANY MORE THAN WE CAN.
To protect and serve
LORD KNOWS WHERE IT'S ALL GOING TO END!

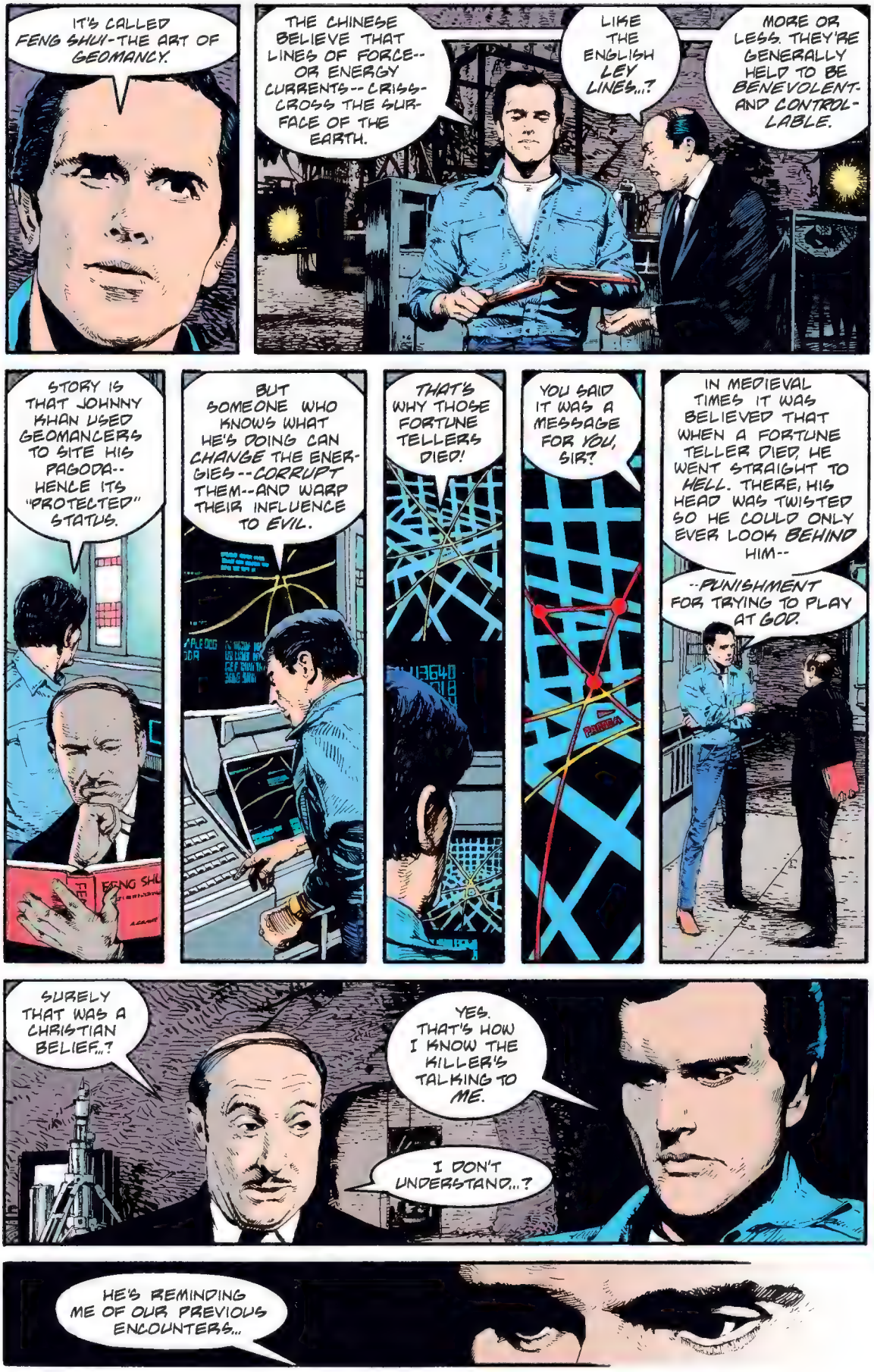
〈HIM?〉
〈CAN IT BE?〉
〈HERE?〉
〈TRULY THE STAR-GODS SMILE!〉
HOY MAN FORTUNE TELLER

--MORE THAN A LITTLE EXCITEMENT IN CHINATOWN LAST NIGHT, SIR!
THREE FORTUNE-TELLERS SLAUGHTERED--GARROTED, THE POLICE SAY. AND SHADES OF "THE EXORCIST"--
--TWO OF THEM HAD THEIR NECKS BROKEN--AFTER DEATH, MIND YOU--! AND ROTATED THROUGH A FULL 180 DEGREES!
LET ME SEE THAT, ALFRED--
IS SOMETHING WRONG, SIR?
Bizarre Deal
I THINK IT IS.
I DON'T KNOW THESE MEN--OR WHY THEY DIED. BUT I'M FAIRLY SURE--
SPORTS
Flyers win
--THE REST IS A MESSAGE FOR ME!


‹$5,000 BAIL! YOU THINK YOU ARE WORTH THAT--›
‹-- WHEN YOU FAIL TO COLLECT MY TAXES?›
"BATTLE ROCK" PAGODA
‹IT WAS NOT OUR FAULT, MISTER KHAN! IT WAS THE BATMAN!›
‹BATMAN! I TIRE OF HEARING THAT NAME!›
‹HE IS WORSE THAN THE POLICE, INTERFERING IN MY AFFAIRS!›
‹I THINK THE TIME HAS COME FOR US TO... DEAL WITH HIM.›
‹LEAVE IT TO US, SIR! WE'LL--›
‹YOU FOOL, HOICHI! YOU HAVE ALREADY FAILED!›
SKAAP!
‹MULE-- TEACH HIM!›
N-NO--!
WRUNCH!
AAAAIIII!


〈LET THIS BE A REMINDER TO ALL OF YOU. FAIL ME AGAIN, AND--〉
〈--THAT WILL BE YOUR FATE!〉
I DO NOT LIKE THIS. SOMETHING... FEELS WRONG.
BUT HOW, SIR? WE ARE PROTECTED--!
NEVERTHELESS... A WISE MAN RELIES ON NOTHING. DOUBLE THE GUARD. PUT ALL THE MEN ON ALERT.
SOMETHING IS GOING TO HAPPEN!

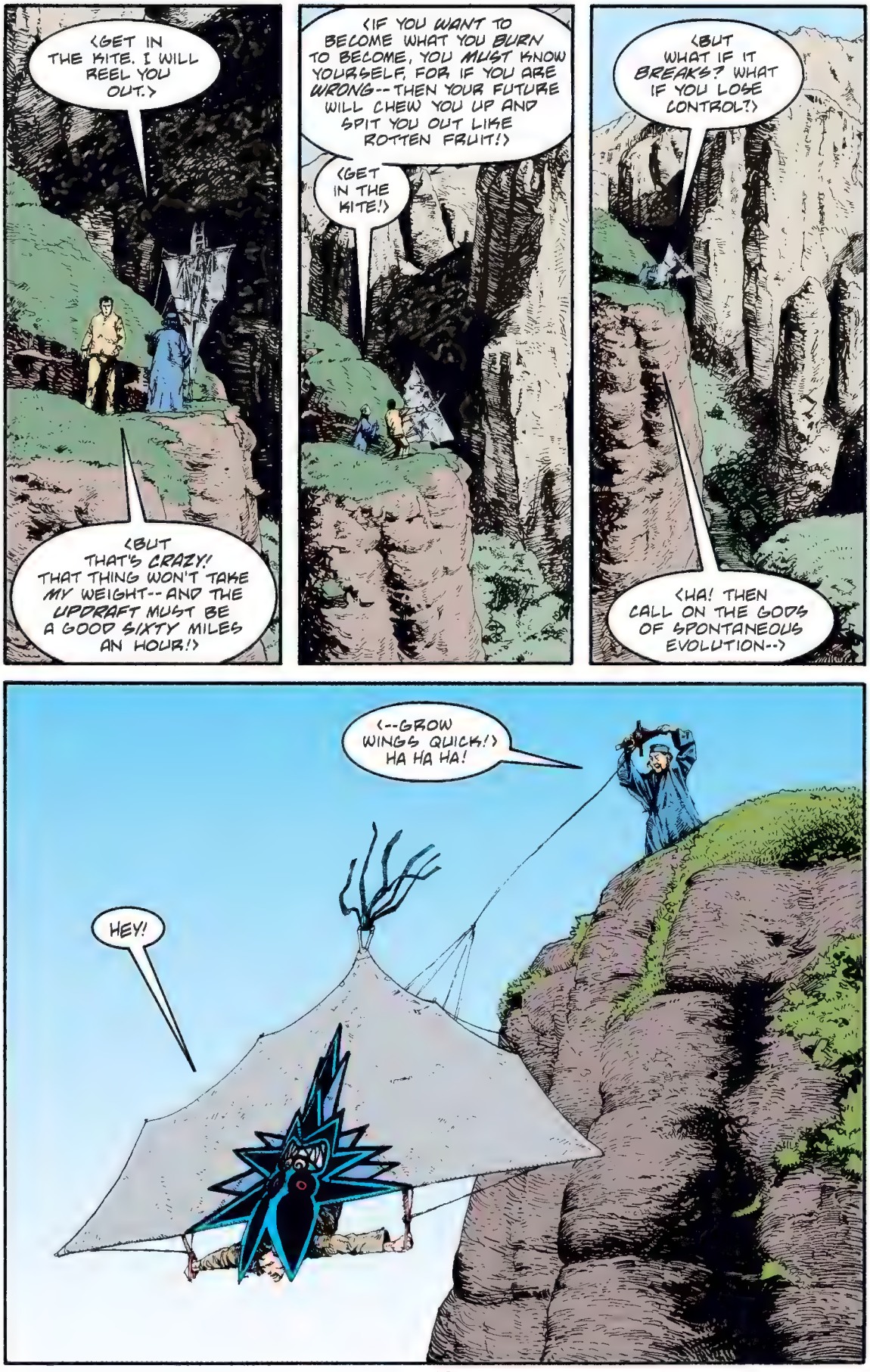

YOU DID ALL I ASKED FOR...
...AND MORE.
Gotham Telegraph
Chinatown Maniac Kills 3
Police baffled By Unusual injuries
New Arrivals Nervous
WHY IS THAT, DRAGON? WHY THE UNUSUAL INJURIES?
IT WAS A MESSAGE.
FOR WHOM?
I BROUGHT YOU TO GOTHAM FOR A SPECIFIC TASK, DRAGON. I DO NOT WANT THAT ENDANGERED.
IT WON'T BE, XINJA. SEE--
--THESE ARE THE DRAGON LINES, THE FORCE THAT PROTECTS KHAN'S PAGODA.
THE SKULLS MARK WHERE THE AUGURERS DIED.
THAT NEED NOT CONCERN YOU.
ALREADY THEIR DEATHS ACT ON THE EARTH CURRENTS, CORRUPTING THEM, TRANSFORMING THEM FROM PURITY--
--TO THE BLACK SHA.
TWELVE MORE HOURS AND HIS PROTECTION WILL BE GONE.
AND JOHNNY KHAN...?
DIES TONIGHT.
BUT NOT ALONE.

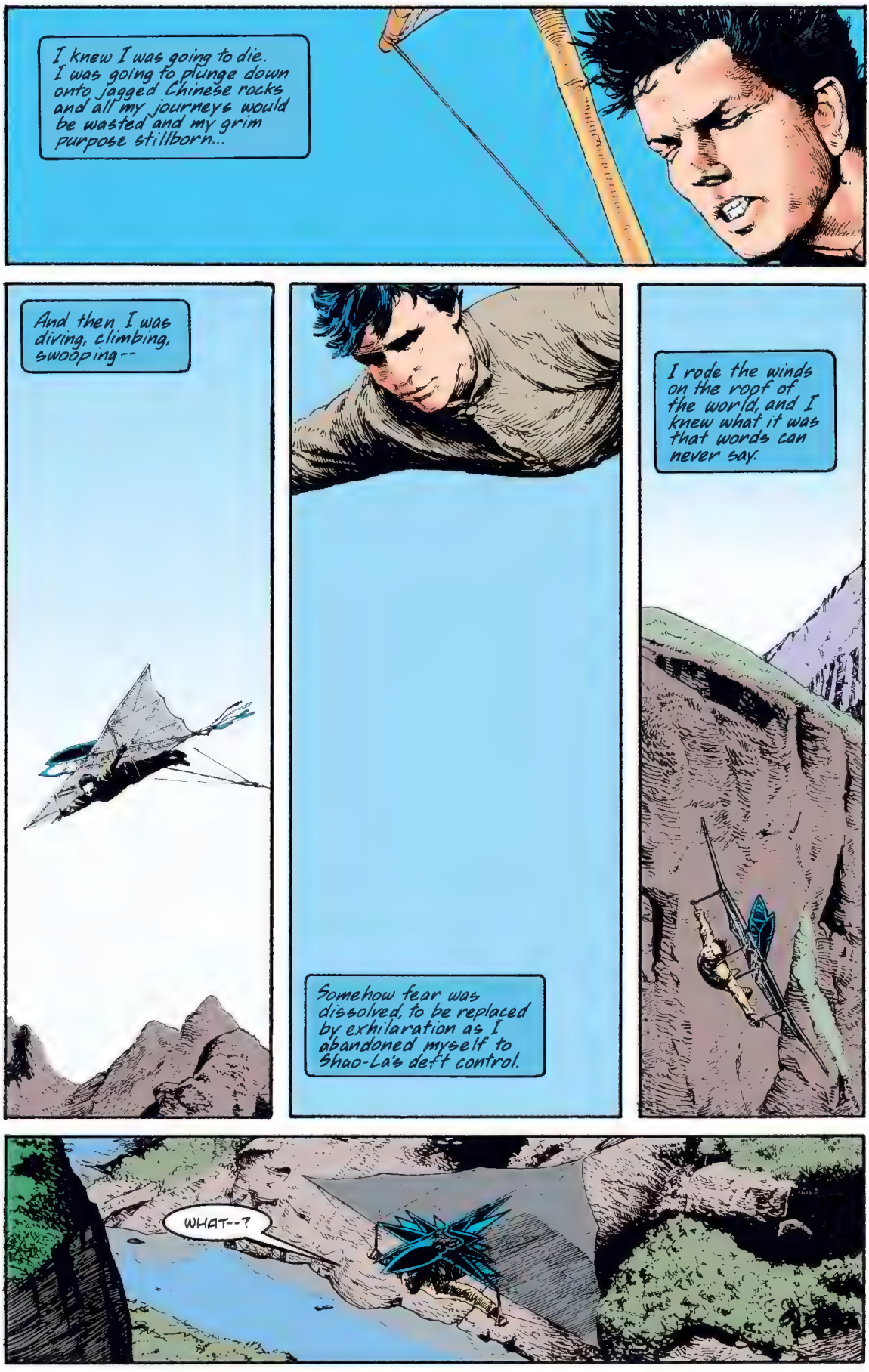

IT'S CALLED FENG SHUI--THE ART OF GEOMANCY.
THE CHINESE BELIEVE THAT LINES OF FORCE--OR ENERGY CURRENTS--CRISS-CROSS THE SURFACE OF THE EARTH.
LIKE THE ENGLISH LEY LINES...?
MORE OR LESS. THEY'RE GENERALLY HELD TO BE BENEVOLENT AND CONTROLLABLE.
STORY IS THAT JOHNNY KHAN USED GEOMANCERS TO SITE HIS PAGODA--HENCE ITS "PROTECTED" STATUS.
BUT SOMEONE WHO KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING CAN CHANGE THE ENERGIES--CORRUPT THEM--AND WARP THEIR INFLUENCE TO EVIL.
THAT'S WHY THOSE FORTUNE TELLERS DIED!
YOU SAID IT WAS A MESSAGE FOR YOU, SIR?
IN MEDIEVAL TIMES IT WAS BELIEVED THAT WHEN A FORTUNE TELLER DIED, HE WENT STRAIGHT TO HELL. THERE, HIS HEAD WAS TWISTED SO HE COULD ONLY EVER LOOK BEHIND HIM--
--PUNISHMENT FOR TRYING TO PLAY AT GOD.
SURELY THAT WAS A CHRISTIAN BELIEF...?
YES. THAT'S HOW I KNOW THE KILLER'S TALKING TO ME.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND...?
HE'S REMINDING ME OF OUR PREVIOUS ENCOUNTERS...

During my studies in the East I'd heard a lot about Taoism. They said its practitioners were magicians--alchemists--men of power who could read the future.
Those were secrets I wanted to know.
So I found myself high in the Tanggula Shan mountains, near the border of China and Tibet--
(MASTER SHAO-LA!)
(MASTER SHAO-LA...?)
(MASTER SHAO-LA!)
(SIR...?)

〈YES.. MISS?〉
HA HA HA HA HA!
〈I'M SORRY...! WHEN I HEARD OF THE SAGE SHAO-LA, I JUST ASSUMED.. PLEASE--ACCEPT MY HUMBLE APOLOGIES.〉
〈I COME TO ASK IF YOU WILL TEACH ME ABOUT THE TAO.〉
〈HA! THEN HERE IS YOUR FIRST LESSON--〉
〈THE TAO THAT CAN BE TAUGHT IS NOT THE TRUE TAO!〉
〈RICE-- HERBS. WATER OUTSIDE. MAKE US A MEAL.〉
〈COOK? BUT I THOUGHT--〉
Chinese was never my strongest point-- especially this rough local dialect. I thought I'd misunderstood.
〈SECOND LESSON:-- DON'T THINK!〉
〈TO FOLLOW THE TAO IS TO EMPTY YOUR MIND. EACH DAY, KNOW A LITTLE LESS-- UNTIL IN THE END, YOU ARE ONE WITH THE WAY.〉
〈AS YOU WERE ALL ALONG!〉

Tao is The Way, the unknown and unknowable reality which lies behind existence.
Shao-La compared it to a current, or a wind, that flows through everything; the enlightened person, or sage, is he--or she--who flows with it, untouched by the stuff of the world.
It's intuitive, anti-intellectual--and Shao-La had an interesting initiation--
<YOU WANT ME TO WHAT?>


(GET IN THE KITE. I WILL REEL YOU OUT.)
(BUT THAT'S CRAZY! THAT THING WON'T TAKE MY WEIGHT--AND THE UPDRAFT MUST BE A GOOD SIXTY MILES AN HOUR!)
(IF YOU WANT TO BECOME WHAT YOU BURN TO BECOME, YOU MUST KNOW YOURSELF, FOR IF YOU ARE WRONG--THEN YOUR FUTURE WILL CHEW YOU UP AND SPIT YOU OUT LIKE ROTTEN FRUIT!)
(GET IN THE KITE!)
(BUT WHAT IF IT BREAKS? WHAT IF YOU LOSE CONTROL?)
(HA! THEN CALL ON THE GODS OF SPONTANEOUS EVOLUTION--)
(--GROW WINGS QUICK!) HA HA HA!
HEY!

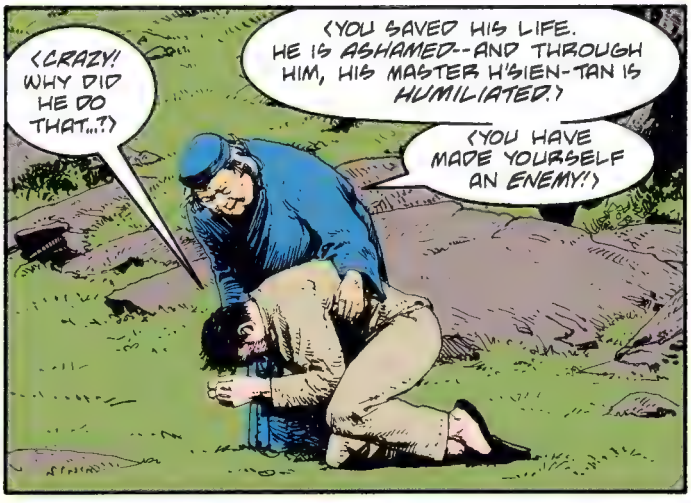

I knew I was going to die. I was going to plunge down onto jagged Chinese rocks and all my journeys would be wasted and my grim purpose stillborn...
And then I was diving, climbing, swooping--
Somehow fear was dissolved, to be replaced by exhilaration as I abandoned myself to Shao-La's deft control.
I rode the winds on the roof of the world, and I knew what it was that words can never say.
WHAT--?

WHAT IN THE NAME--?
HE'S CRAZY! WHERE DID HE GO--?
〈H'SIEN-TAN... ENOUGH!〉
〈HE IS A WESTERNER! HE DOES NOT KNOW THE GAME!〉
〈H'SIEN-TAN! DO YOU HEAR?〉
〈ENOUGH!〉
BLAST! HE'S MISJUDGED IT!
HE'S GOING TO HIT--!
KRAAK!

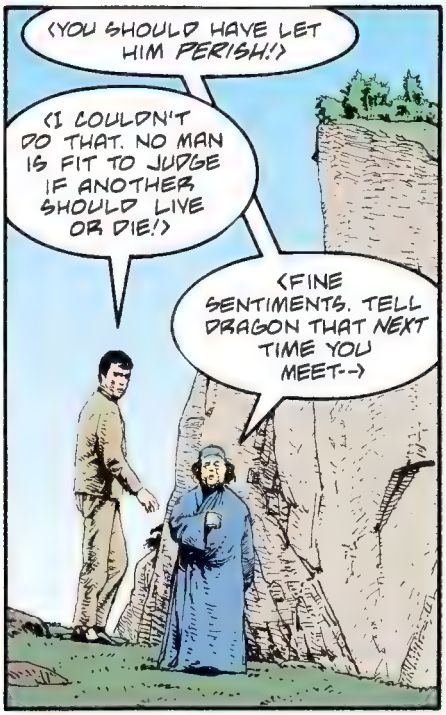
〈NO--!〉
〈GOT YOU!〉
〈A CLOSE THING, LITTLE DRAGON. YOU SHOULD BE GRATEFUL.〉
〈IT'S NOT THANKS I WANT--IT'S AN APOLOGY! HE COULD HAVE KILLED US BOTH!〉
〈WELL...?〉

TAKK!

Uuuuuh!


〈CRAZY! WHY DID HE DO THAT...?〉
〈YOU SAVED HIS LIFE. HE IS ASHAMED--AND THROUGH HIM, HIS MASTER H'SIEN-TAN IS HUMILIATED.〉
〈YOU HAVE MADE YOURSELF AN ENEMY!〉

〈I DON'T UNDERSTAND... ARE THEY TAOIST, TOO?〉
〈IN THEIR MANNER. BUT THEY HAVE CHOSEN THE WAY OF PERSONAL POWER. THEY SEEK TO CONTROL THE CH'I--THE LIFE FORCE.〉

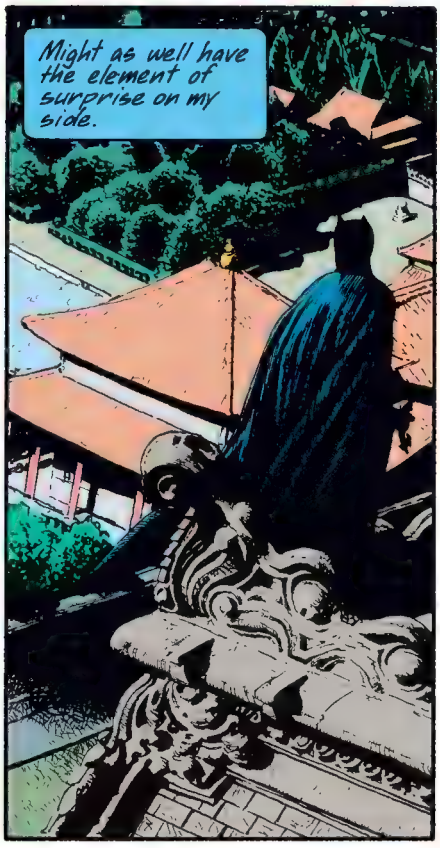

〈YOU SHOULD HAVE LET HIM PERISH!〉
〈I COULDN'T DO THAT. NO MAN IS FIT TO JUDGE IF ANOTHER SHOULD LIVE OR DIE!〉
〈FINE SENTIMENTS. TELL DRAGON THAT NEXT TIME YOU MEET--〉

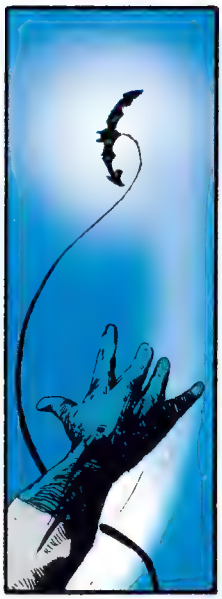
〈WHEN HE TRIES TO KILL YOU!〉

I thought they were dead, H'sien-tan and his crazy pupil. If I'm right, at least Dragon is still alive.

For some reason he's going after Johnny Khan... and then, no doubt, me. He has a lot more than one score to settle.

No point trying to avoid him. He'll find me sooner or later.


Might as well have the element of surprise on my side.



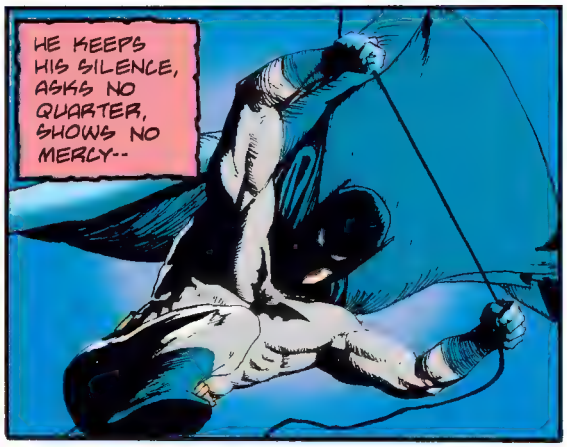
Khan's geomancers aligned the pagodas to be protected naturally by the Ch'i force.
It's one way of explaining why he has a finger in every vice in Chinatown, yet he's never been busted.
Maybe tonight...
A THOUSAND WELCOMES TO THE HOUSE OF KHAN!
next issue:
DRAGON

BATMAN
LEGENDS OF THE
DARK KNIGHT
NO 53
LATE OCT 93
175
CAN-225
TAO
TWO OF TWO
ALAN GRANT & ARTHUR RANSON
ARTHUR RANSON

TILL NOW, I WASN'T 100% SURE. BUT AS HE CONFRONTS JOHNNY KHAN, I KNOW.
YOU'VE MEDDLED ONCE TOO OFTEN IN MY AFFAIRS, BATMAN!

YOU HAVE NO EVIDENCE TO INCRIMINATE ME--AND YOU HAVE BROKEN IN HERE ILLEGALLY!
EVEN THE LAW WILL SAY YOU GOT WHAT'S COMING!
I SAW HIM TWICE, TEN YEARS AGO, YET I KNOW HIM BETTER THAN KHAN EVER WILL. THIS MAN WILL CUT THROUGH THEM LIKE A KNIFE.
THE WARRIOR STRIKES FIRST, BEFORE THEIR DULL MINDS CAN FOCUS--
WKUNK!
AAAAH!
THE WEAPONS MEN HIS FIRST PRIORITY--
FFFWAK!
URRK!
SHTAM!
OUFFF!
NNNGH*
THD!
WOMPF
HE USES FIGHTING STYLES AS HE NEEDS THEM--KARATE, JU-JITSU, AIKIDO--
<CAN'T YOU TAKE ONE MAN...?>
<TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS TO THE ONE WHO FELLS HIM!>
HAIIII!

AIIIEEE!
THUNG

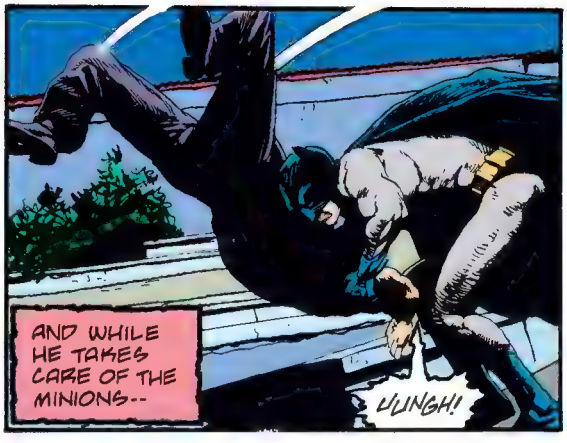

HE KEEPS HIS SILENCE, ASKS NO QUARTER, SHOWS NO MERCY--

WHAM!

WOMP!

‹MULE HAS HIM!›

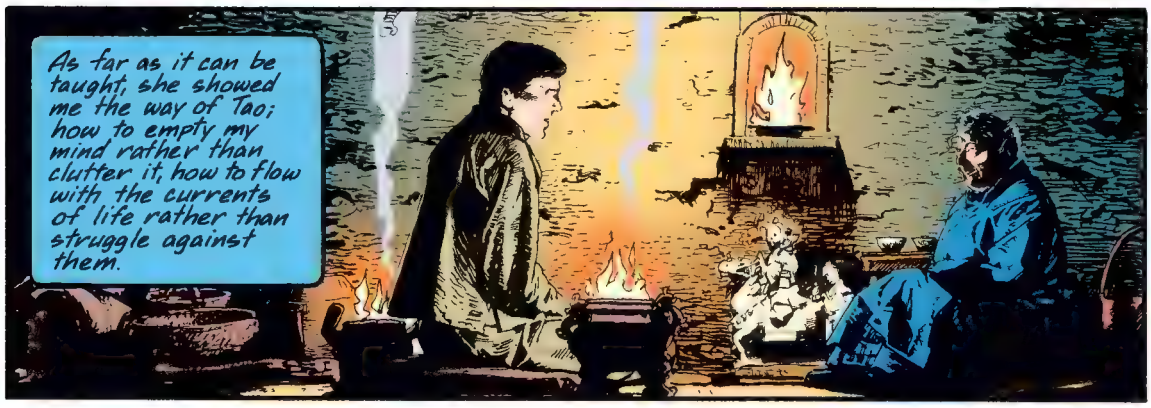
SHTAM!


AND WHILE HE TAKES CARE OF THE MINIONS--
UUNGH!

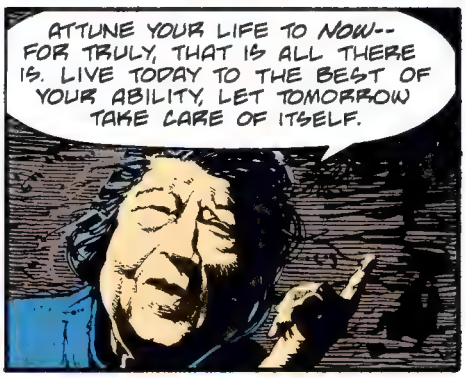
SPADOOSH!
AAAAIIIIEEEooo
<DAMN YOU!>
<MUST I DO EVERYTHING MY-->
MY TARGET IS UNMARKED.
<WHAT?>
<HELP!>
ENOUGH! N-NO MORE!
<THE PAGODA'S PROTECTION IS GONE!>
<LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!>
LET THEM GO!

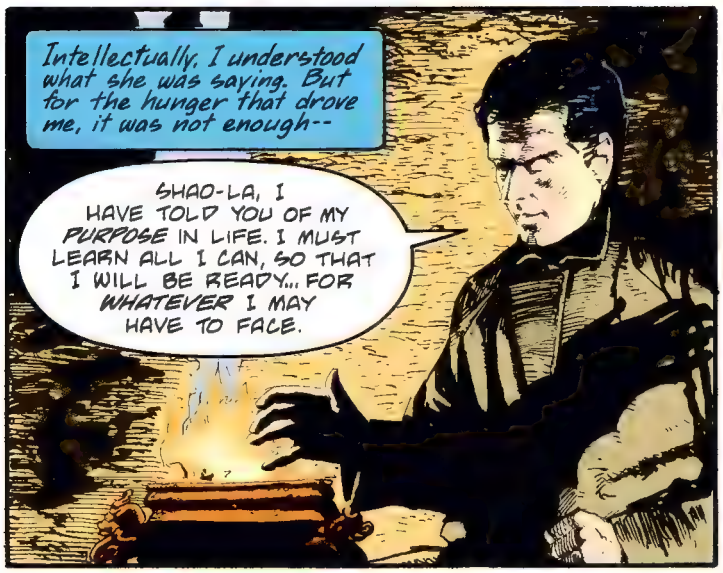
I HAVE THE ONE YOU WANT!
SET HIM FREE, DRAGON. THIS ISN'T YOUR FIGHT!
I HAVE BEEN PAID FOR HIS DEATH. DON'T TELL ME YOU STILL FOLLOW THAT WEAKLING'S "NO MAN HAS THE RIGHT TO KILL ANOTHER" LINE?
EXACTLY WHAT DO YOU WANT OF ME?
YOU OWE ME. YOU TOOK EVERY-THING I HAD AND LEFT ME TO DIE.
GARBAGE! EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED FELL SQUARELY ON YOUR OWN HEAD!
THE TIME HAS COME FOR YOU TO PAY.

I stayed three months with the sage Shao-La in her mountain fastness.


As far as it can be taught, she showed me the way of Tao; how to empty my mind rather than clutter it, how to flow with the currents of life rather than struggle against them.

But there was one thing I still burned to know--
THE FUTURE?
FORGET IT! IT DOES NOT EXIST!


ATTUNE YOUR LIFE TO NOW-- FOR TRULY, THAT IS ALL THERE IS. LIVE TODAY TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY, LET TOMORROW TAKE CARE OF ITSELF.


Intellectually, I understood what she was saying. But for the hunger that drove me, it was not enough--
SHAO-LA, I HAVE TOLD YOU OF MY PURPOSE IN LIFE. I MUST LEARN ALL I CAN, SO THAT I WILL BE READY... FOR WHATEVER I MAY HAVE TO FACE.

I MUST KNOW IF I WASTE MY TIME--IF I'M DOOMED TO FAIL-- OR IF THE FUTURE IS HOW I DREAM IT!

TAO

PART TWO: DRAGON

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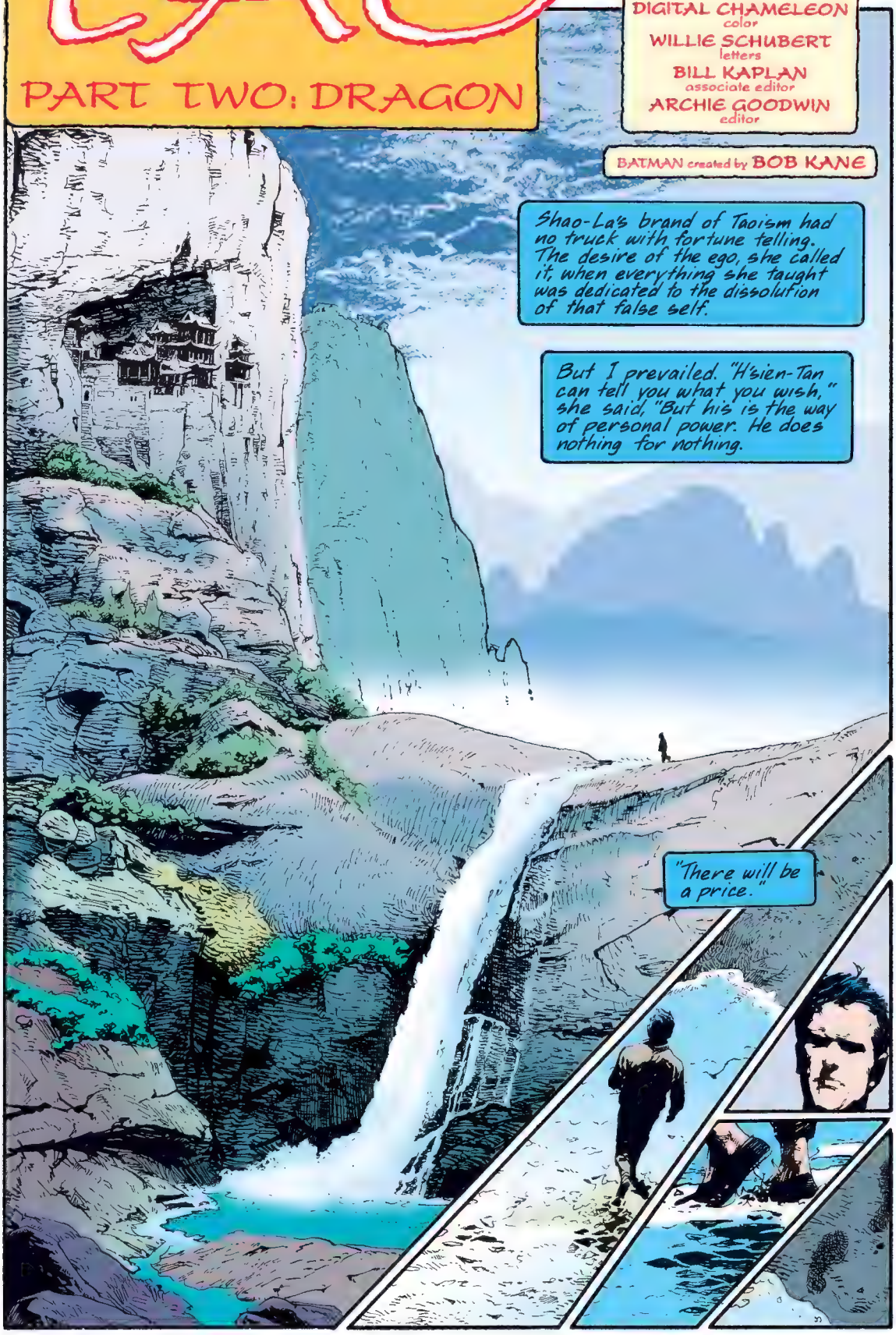
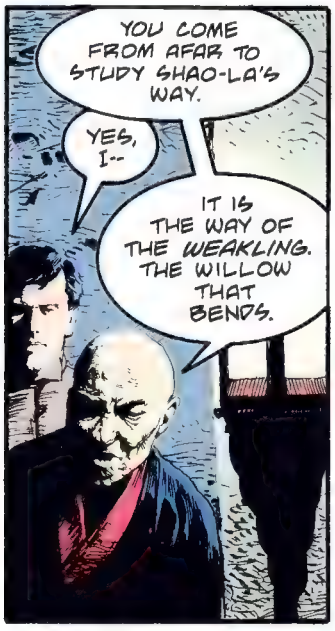

Shao-La's brand of Taoism had no truck with fortune telling. The desire of the ego, she called it, when everything she taught was dedicated to the dissolution of that false self.
But I prevailed. "H'sien-Tan can tell you what you wish," she said, "But his is the way of personal power. He does nothing for nothing.
"There will be a price."

Through some freak local weather condition storms played continuously round the peak from which the ancient monastery was carved.
It felt evil, somehow. Tainted.
But I bit back my unease. Here on the roof of the world, in thin air at strength-sapping altitude, magic has its own logic.
YOU ARE A FOOL TO COME HERE.
IF THAT IS SO I WOULD PREFER TO HEAR IT FROM YOUR MASTER.
H'SIEN-TAN HAS NO TIME FOR THE LIKES OF YOU!
DEFEND YOURSELF!
LOOK, I'M NOT HERE TO FIGHT YOU.
DEFEND YOURSELF!

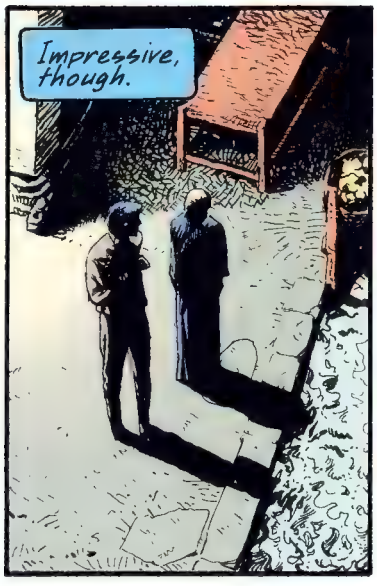
The lightning flashed and the thunder roared--yet we both felt his presence--
MASTER!
THAT IS NO WAY TO GREET A GUEST.
HE NEEDS REFRESHMENT AFTER HIS JOURNEY. GO. PREPARE TEA.
YOU-- FOLLOW ME
According to Shao-La, this monastery once housed a thousand monks. Now, there was just the old man and his pupil.
He led me through mouldering corridors, past long-fallen idols, deep into the heart of the ancient building.

Where Shao-La's cave was light and tranquil, H'sien-Tan's was oppressive and brooding--as if something corrupt oozed from the spring that bubbled up in its center.

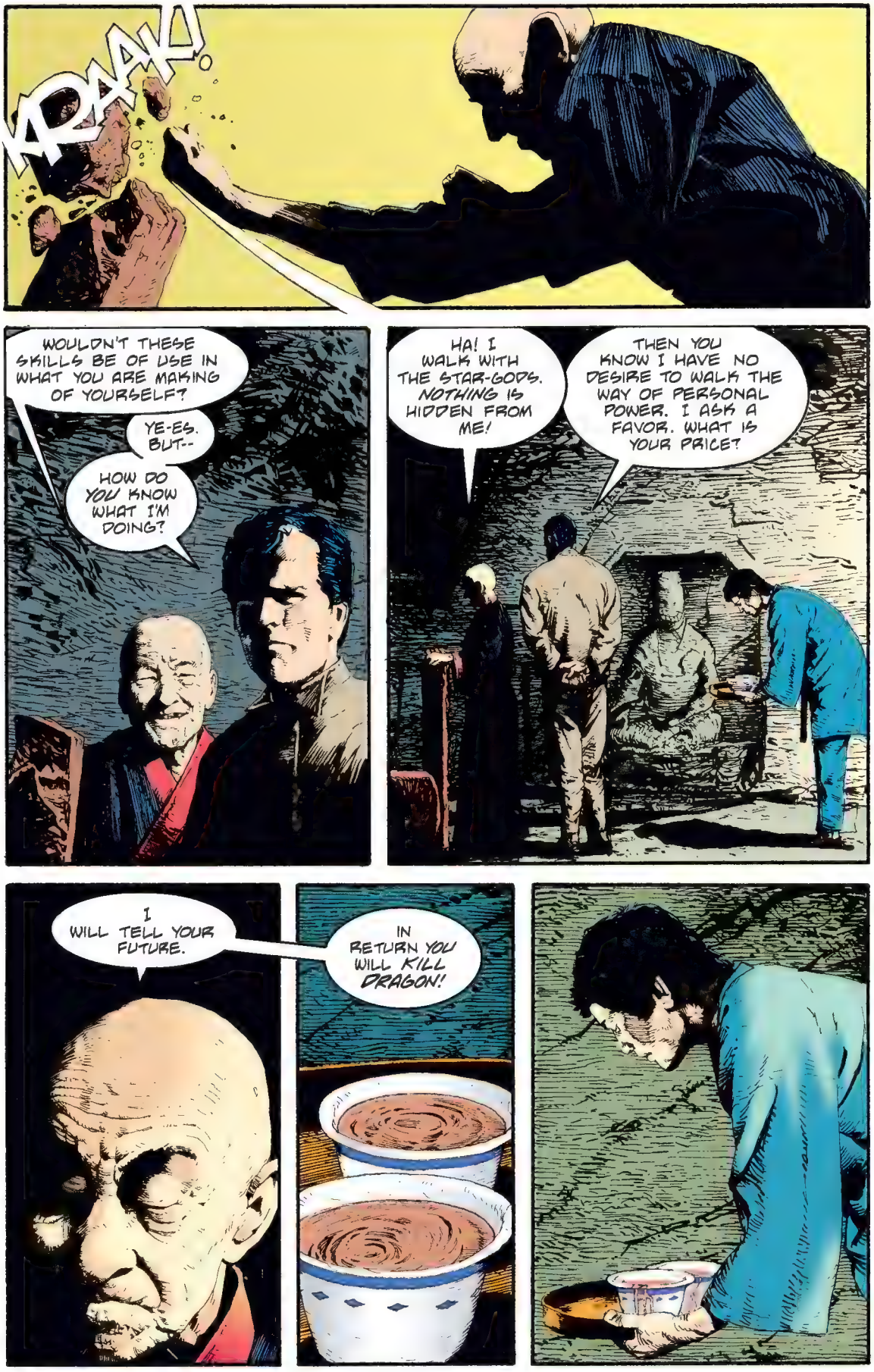

YOU COME FROM AFAR TO STUDY SHAO-LA'S WAY.
YES, I--
IT IS THE WAY OF THE WEAKLING. THE WILLOW THAT BENDS.

DID SHE TEACH YOU... THIS?

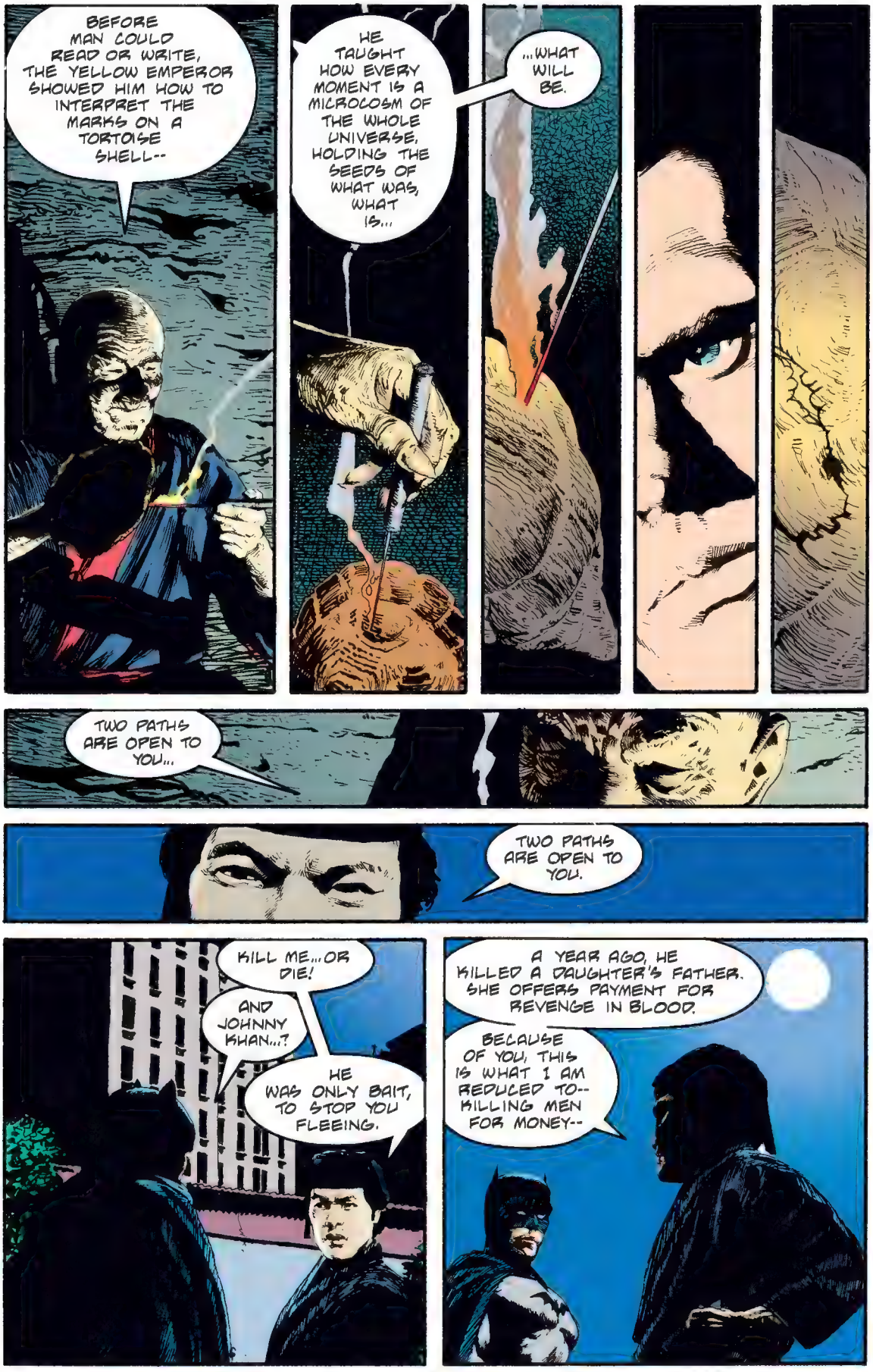
It had to be a trick, some sort of sleight of hand--hypnosis, maybe--


Impressive, though.

NO?
THEN PERHAPS SHE SHOWED YOU THIS--?


KRAK!
WOULDN'T THESE SKILLS BE OF USE IN WHAT YOU ARE MAKING OF YOURSELF?
YE-ES. BUT--
HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT I'M DOING?
HA! I WALK WITH THE STAR-GODS. NOTHING IS HIDDEN FROM ME!
THEN YOU KNOW I HAVE NO DESIRE TO WALK THE WAY OF PERSONAL POWER. I ASK A FAVOR. WHAT IS YOUR PRICE?
I WILL TELL YOUR FUTURE.
IN RETURN YOU WILL KILL DRAGON!

YOU ARE A FAILURE, DRAGON--A HUMILIATION TO ME. YOU KNOW THE STYLE--BUT YOU LACK THE SUBSTANCE.
YOU WILL NEVER BE FIT TO CARRY ON MY WAY!
IF YOU KNOW AS MUCH AS YOU CLAIM, H'SIEN-TAN, THEN YOU KNOW MY DECISION IS ALREADY MADE.
I WILL NOT KILL ANYONE. NOT EVER.
NEVER IS A LONG TIME, BOY!
YOU WOULD MAKE A GOOD PUPIL. NO MATTER. EACH MUST FIND HIS OWN PATH.
SIT.
BUT WON'T YOU GO TO HELL FOR THIS? ONLY YOUR GOD IS PERMITTED TO KNOW THE FUTURE. WON'T DEMONS BREAK YOUR NECK AND TWIST IT BACKWARDS AS PUNISHMENT?
IN MEDIEVAL TIMES, MAYBE. NOT NOW.
BESIDES, HE MIGHT NOT BE MY GOD.

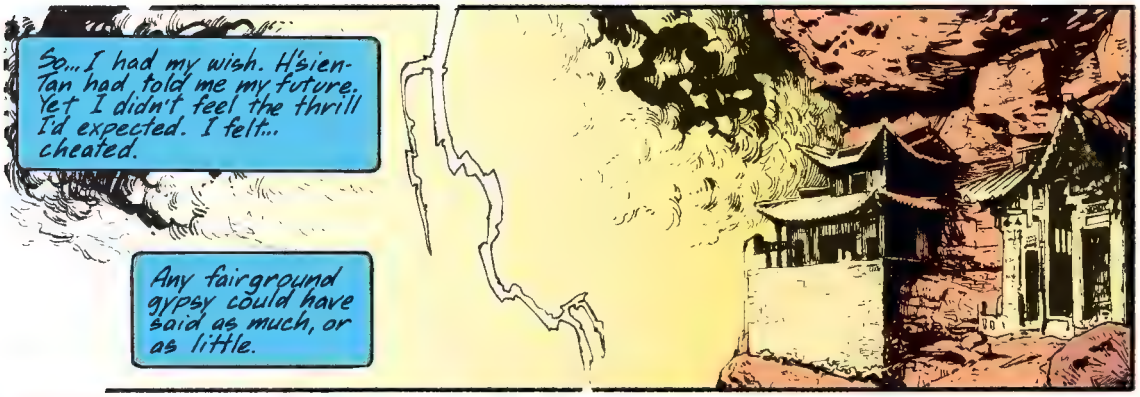

BEFORE MAN COULD READ OR WRITE, THE YELLOW EMPEROR SHOWED HIM HOW TO INTERPRET THE MARKS ON A TORTOISE SHELL--
HE TAUGHT HOW EVERY MOMENT IS A MICROCOSM OF THE WHOLE UNIVERSE, HOLDING THE SEEDS OF WHAT WAS, WHAT IS...
...WHAT WILL BE.
TWO PATHS ARE OPEN TO YOU...
TWO PATHS ARE OPEN TO YOU.
KILL ME...OR DIE!
AND JOHNNY KHAN...?
HE WAS ONLY BAIT, TO STOP YOU FLEEING.
A YEAR AGO, HE KILLED A DAUGHTER'S FATHER. SHE OFFERS PAYMENT FOR REVENGE IN BLOOD.
BECAUSE OF YOU, THIS IS WHAT I AM REDUCED TO-- KILLING MEN FOR MONEY--

--AND JOHNNY KHAN IS PAID FOR!
TCHING!
YOUR MISTAKE!
SAVING KHAN WILL COST YOUR OWN LIFE!
WHUMP!

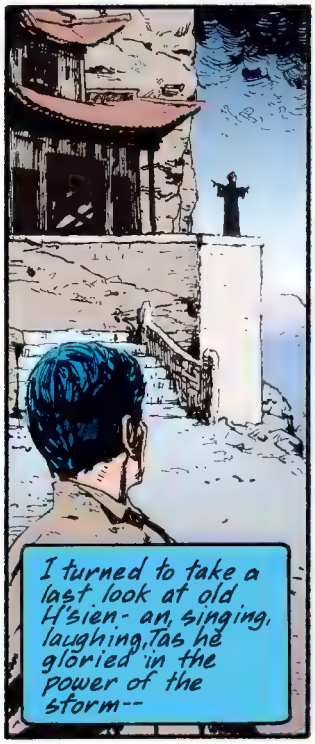
REMEMBER THE TIGER FIST?
REMEMBER THIS--?
His eyes--like H'sien-Tan's! Can't look away...!
Maybe it is a trick--hypnosis...
Phosphor cap should take care of it!
My back wants to call it a night--but this creep won't ever stop coming--
Best get it over and done with.
WOKK!

FOLLOW ONE PATH AND YOUR WAY WILL BE HARD. YOUR LIFE WILL BE SPENT IN A WAR THAT CANNOT BE WON--
BUT YOU WILL BECOME ALMOST EVERYTHING YOU WANT.
THE OTHER PATH LOOKS STRAIGHT, BUT ITS HEART IS TWISTED. YOU WOULD KNOW POWER SUCH AS FEW MEN DREAM OF. IMMORTALITY COULD BE YOURS FOR THE ASKING!
BUT IN THE END BOTH PATHS MEET. SOONER OR LATER, YOU WILL KILL DRAGON--

OR, HE WILL KILL YOU.
DOOF!
KRAAASH!
Fighting's one lesson he obviously didn't fail. He's as good as me--or I'm as good as him.
Our eyes lock--


So... I had my wish. H'sien-Tan had told me my future. Yet I didn't feel the thrill I'd expected. I felt... cheated.
Any fairground gypsy could have said as much, or as little.

I'd had enough. I wanted away from this place, away from its dingy halls and air of menace.

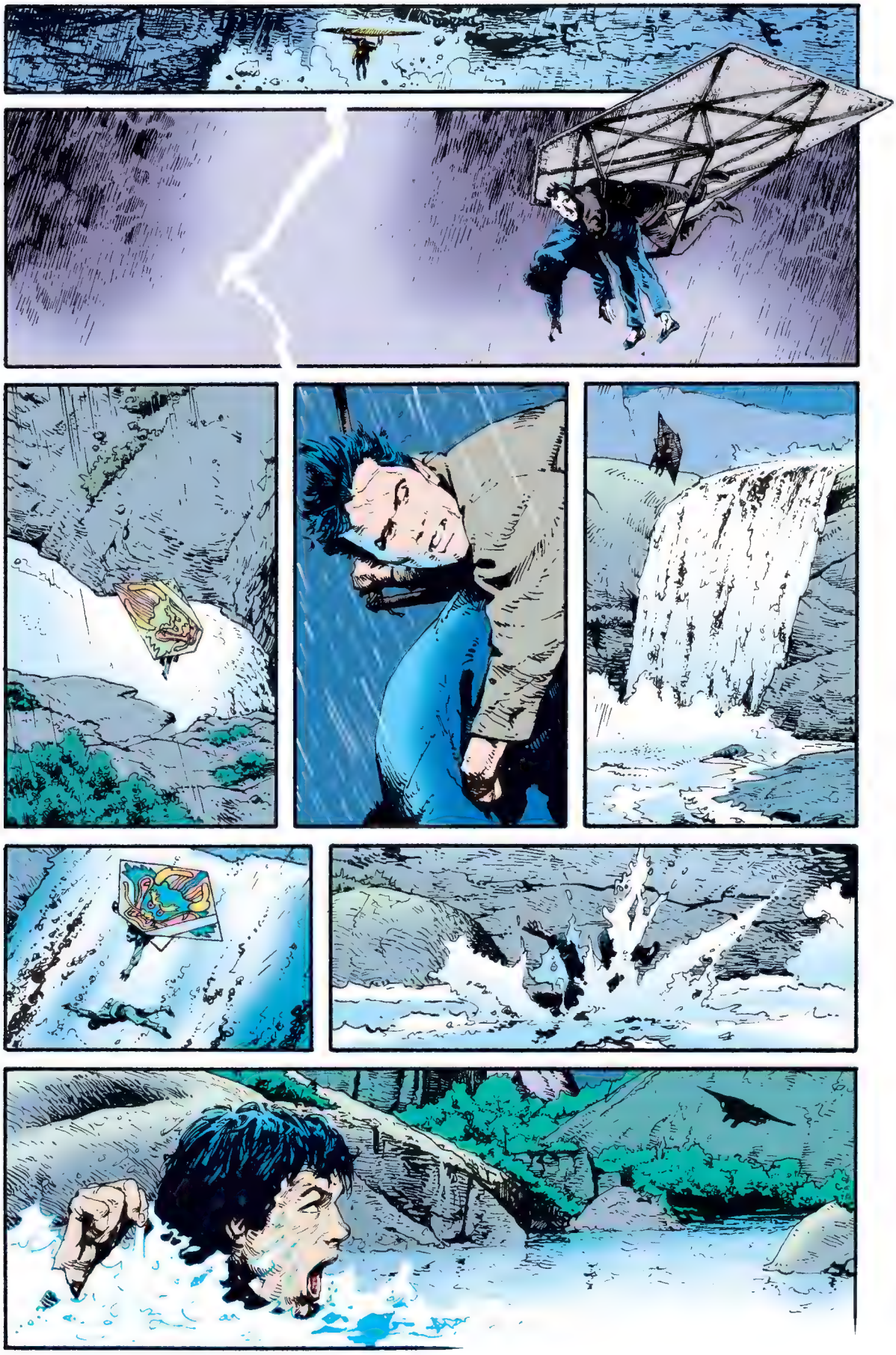

I turned to take a last look at old H'sien-an, singing, laughing, as he gloried in the power of the storm--

FIZZAAAKK!
Totally blind to what the future held for him--

H'SIEN-TAN!

MASTER! MASTER--!

HE'S DEAD!
YOU! YOU CAUSED THIS! IF YOU HADN'T--
THE WHOLE PLACE IS COMING DOWN!
WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO ARGUE!
There was no saving the old man--but no need for Dragon to die with him.
I'LL NEVER GET THROUGH! WE'RE DONE FOR-- UNLESS...



We stand there, poised, frozen--

Strikes and parries and feints play out in our minds as we seek each other's weakness.

For long minutes our moves match, like a well-rehearsed dance.

Then he falters, and suddenly we both know --

He's not good enough.
YOU HAVE TAKEN EVERYTHING--MY MASTER, MY TRAINING, MY HOME. NOW YOU TAKE MY LIFE.
THAT'S NOT HOW I WORK, DRAGON!
IT IS THE WAY. H'SIEN-TAN FORETOLD IT. IT MUST COME TO PASS.
DON'T BE A FOOL, MAN!

Y-YOU DID THAT! YOU JUST-- LOOKED INTO HIS EYES...AND MADE HIM KILL HIMSELF!
YOUR PROTECTION IS GONE, KHAN. DO YOU WANT TO GO THE SAME WAY?
N-NO! DON'T!
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT YOU WANT TO KNOW!
JUST-- PLEASE DON'T KILL ME!
"The Way never acts, yet nothing remains undone." -Lao Tzu.

BATMAN
LEGENDS OF THE
DARK KNIGHT
NO 54 NOV 93
1.75 CAN 2.25
MIGNOLA
SANCTUM
DAN RASPLER ▼ MIKE MIGNOLA

I CAN'T SEE A DAMN THING. NOW YOU, DROOD...
...YOU HAD VISION.
HAVE.
YOU HAVE VISION.
OR YOU WILL HAVE. YOU ARE THE EYE, DROOD, YOU'RE THE ALL-SEEING EYE.
ME, I'M NOTHING.
NOT YOUR EYE, NOT EVEN YOUR HAND.
I'M YOUR FINGER, DROOD.
YOU ARE YOUR EYE.
OPEN YOUR EYE, DROOD! COME WATCH ME!
WATCH YOUR FINGER OPEN YOUR EYE!

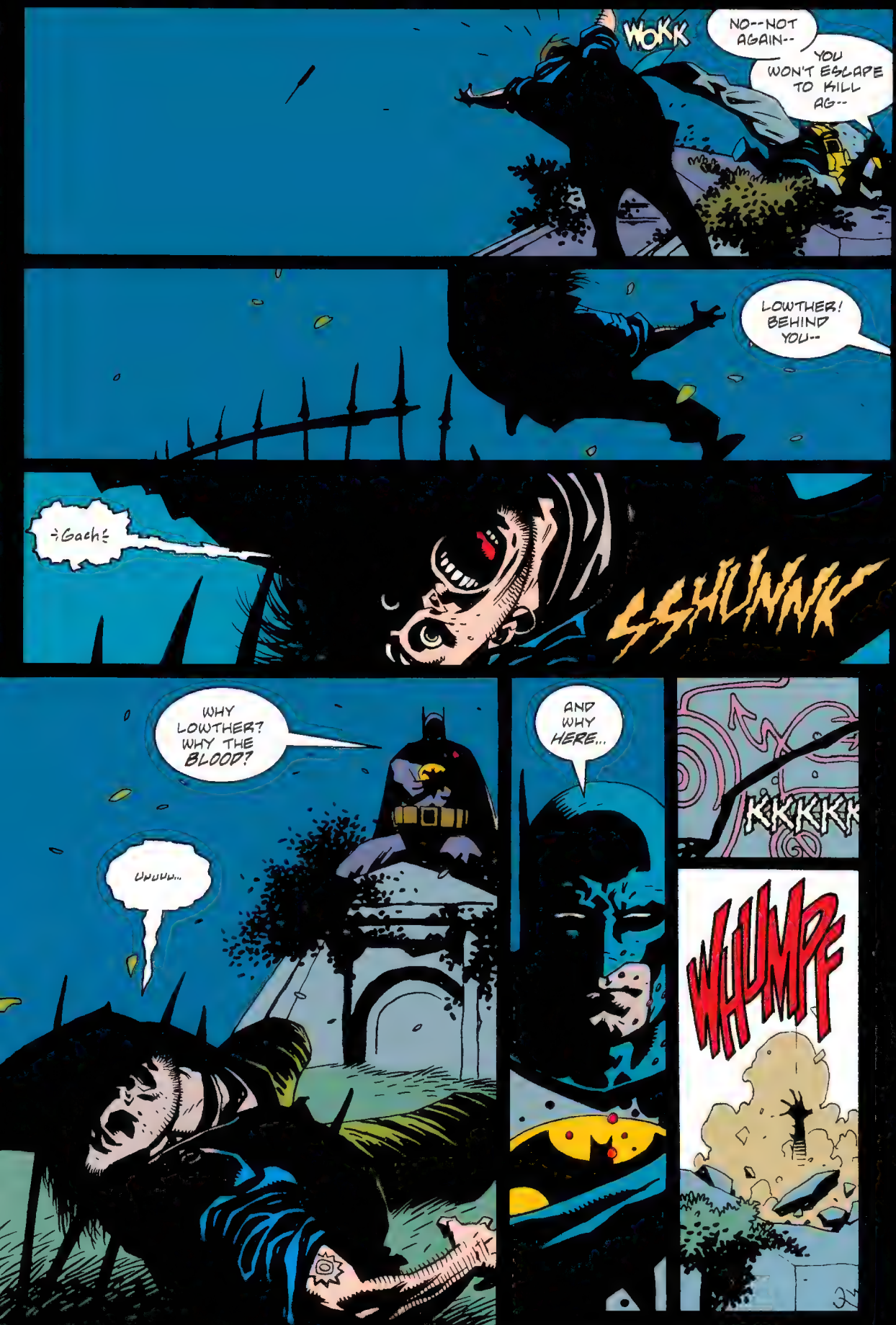
SANCTUM

THAT'S ENOUGH, LOWTHER!

IT ENDS TONIGHT!

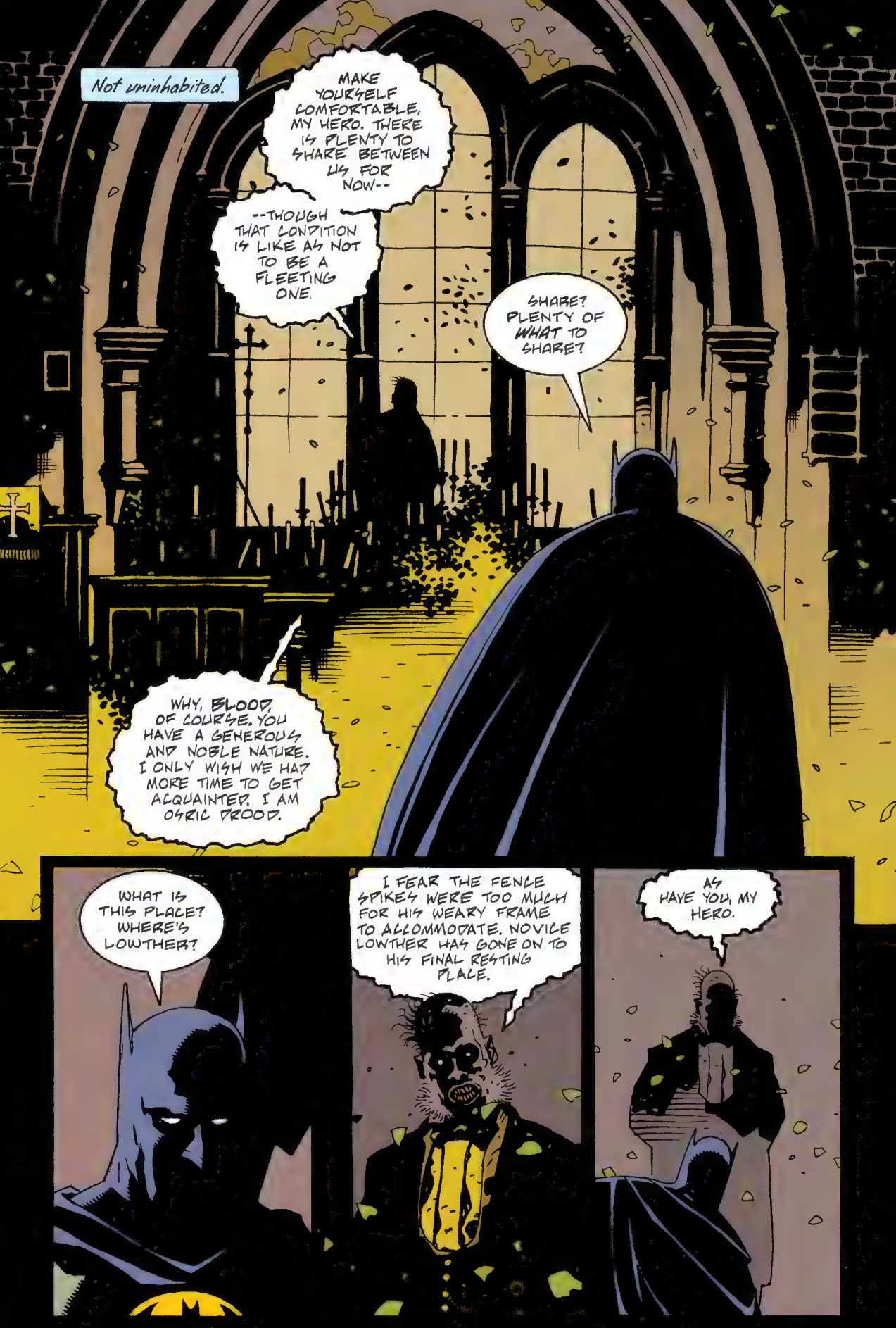
DON'T COME NEAR ME, MAN! GO HOME TO YOUR FAMILY!
I GOT ALL THE BLOOD I NEED!
DROP THE KNIFE, LOWTHER!
Nuh-- nuh...
DAMN YOU! DROP IT!
KRAK
WHUK
THAK
IT'S MY KNIFE--
THP

--AN' I'M NOT DONE WITH IT!
THUTCH
:AAAH:
POK
YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I NEED?
Unh
HOW HARD I WORKED TO GET IT?
YOU THINK BLOOD GROWS ON TREES?
KKRAKK
WELL, BELIEVE ME, IT DON'T!


WOKK
NO--NOT AGAIN--
YOU WON'T ESCAPE TO KILL AG--
LOWTHER! BEHIND YOU--
÷Gach÷
SSHUNK
WHY LOWTHER? WHY THE BLOOD?
Uhuuu...
AND WHY HERE...
KKKKK
WHUMPF

Where...
Where's Lowther?
And where am I?
That mausoleum roof collapsed. But...
I know I didn't land here.

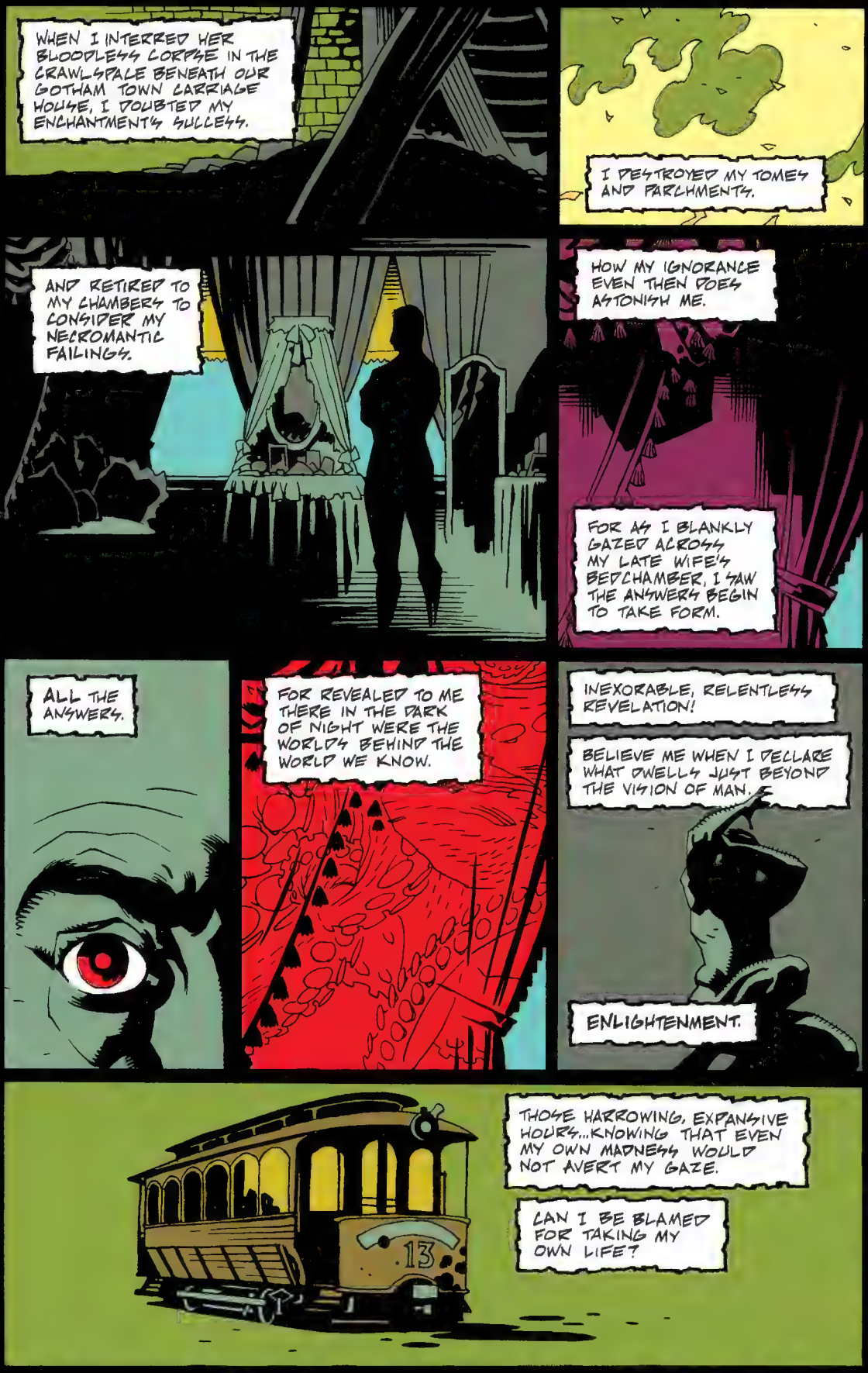
This place...it's like a museum. A Victorian indulgence...
Completely unchanged for 100 years.
Unchanged, and unlived in. But I suspect...


Not uninhabited.
MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE, MY HERO. THERE IS PLENTY TO SHARE BETWEEN US FOR NOW--
--THOUGH THAT CONDITION IS LIKE AS NOT TO BE A FLEETING ONE.
SHARE? PLENTY OF WHAT TO SHARE?
WHY, BLOOD, OF COURSE. YOU HAVE A GENEROUS AND NOBLE NATURE. I ONLY WISH WE HAD MORE TIME TO GET ACQUAINTED. I AM OSRIC DROOD.
WHAT IS THIS PLACE? WHERE'S LOWTHER?
I FEAR THE FENCE SPIKES WERE TOO MUCH FOR HIS WEARY FRAME TO ACCOMMODATE. NOVICE LOWTHER HAS GONE ON TO HIS FINAL RESTING PLACE.
AS HAVE YOU, MY HERO.

WHAT? I'M NOT DEAD...
SOFTLY, MY HERO. IT SHOULD BE A QUIET TIME, THIS, AS WE PASS ON OUR RESPECTIVE JOURNEYS TO DARKNESS AND LIGHT.
GO TO HELL!
=UNGH=
CURIOUS, THIS DEFIANCE, WHEN IT IS YOUR OWN BLOOD--YOUR MURD'ROUS BLOOD-- THAT DOES SUSTAIN ME, EVEN NOW.

I UNDERSTAND ALL, MY BENEFACTOR. BETTER THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE.
BEHOLD THE GOLDEN AGE OF EMPIRE.
IT WAS AN AGE OF ELEGANCE AND DEBAUCHERY. AN AGE OF DESPERATE, FILTHY IGNORANCE...
...MURDEROUS?
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND-- LOWTHER WAS INSANE! I WAS DEFENDING MYSELF!
AND AN AGE OF KNOWLEDGE.
YET I SPEAK NOT OF SCIENCE, NUMBER-BOUND AND UNYIELDING...
BUT MAGIC.

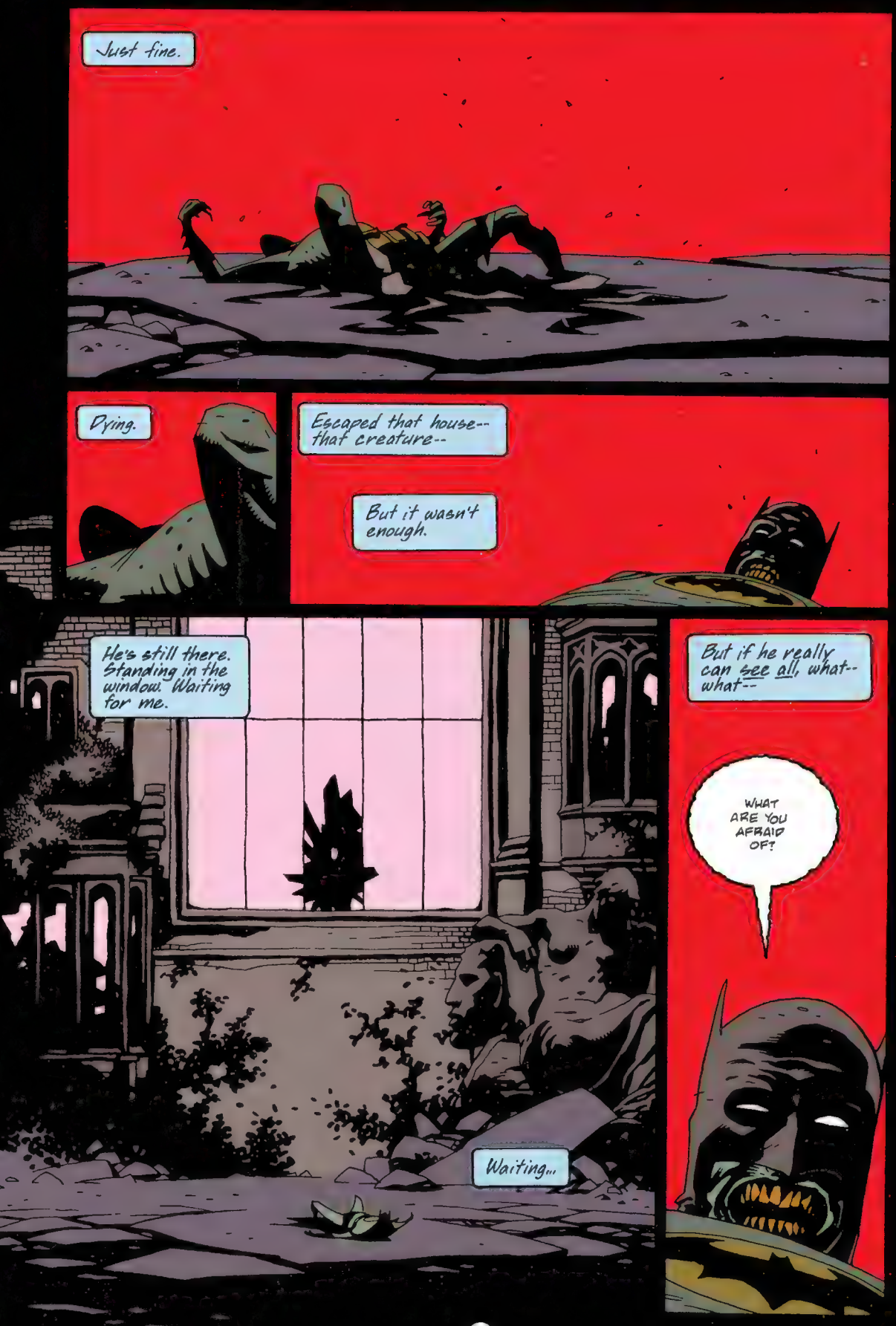
CERTAINLY SCIENCE HAD AFFORDED US THE GAS-LIGHT AND STEAM ENGINE.
MY PEERS AND I, HOWEVER, IN THE ORDER OF THE ALL-SEEING EYE, THIRSTED FOR A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING. A TOTAL KNOWLEDGE.
CAN ONE EVER BE SURPRISED BY THE DEPTHS OF FOOLISHNESS FOUND IN OTHERS? THE PETTY SHORTSIGHTEDNESS?
HAD I TRULY KNOWN HER, I DOUBT THE MARRIAGE WOULD HAVE TAKEN PLACE.
I'M CERTAIN SHE WOULD AGREE WITH ME ON THIS AT LEAST.
BUT HAVING SLAIN HER, I KNEW THERE WAS NO TURNING BACK. AND USING HER OWN BLOOD (SUCH POETRY IN THAT SMALLEST OF GESTURES)...
I ATTEMPTED TO LAST THE SPELL.
I EVOKED THE ELDER ONES-- BESEECHED THEM TO GRANT ME THE BOON I THOUGHT I COULD NOT LIVE WITHOUT...
THE VISION. SECOND SIGHT.
OMNISCIENCE.


WHEN I INTERRED HER BLOODLESS CORPSE IN THE CRAWLSPACE BENEATH OUR GOTHAM TOWN CARRIAGE HOUSE, I DOUBTED MY ENCHANTMENTS SULLESS.
I DESTROYED MY TOMES AND PARCHMENTS.
AND RETIRED TO MY CHAMBERS TO CONSIDER MY NECROMANTIC FAILINGS.
HOW MY IGNORANCE EVEN THEN DOES ASTONISH ME.
FOR AS I BLANKLY GAZED ACROSS MY LATE WIFE'S BEDCHAMBER, I SAW THE ANSWERS BEGIN TO TAKE FORM.
ALL THE ANSWERS.
FOR REVEALED TO ME THERE IN THE DARK OF NIGHT WERE THE WORLDS BEHIND THE WORLD WE KNOW.
INEXORABLE, RELENTLESS REVELATION!
BELIEVE ME WHEN I DECLARE WHAT DWELLS JUST BEYOND THE VISION OF MAN.
ENLIGHTENMENT.
13
THOSE HARROWING, EXPANSIVE HOURS...KNOWING THAT EVEN MY OWN MADNESS WOULD NOT AVERT MY GAZE.
CAN I BE BLAMED FOR TAKING MY OWN LIFE?

IT IS KNOWLEDGE YOU SEEK. I--WHO CAN SEE ALL THINGS--WILL ILLUMINATE.
MY MYSTICAL ABJURATION WAS INVOKED IN MURDER, AND INSCRIBED IN BLOOD.
...YOU'RE DEAD?
YES.
AND IT IS A DYING MURDERER'S BLOOD THAT RESTORES ME.

CONSIDER THIS: BOTH MY WIFE AND NOVICE LOWTHER LIE DEAD. ONE SLAIN BY MY HAND, ONE BY YOURS.
YET OUR CRIMES ARE NOT ALIKE. MINE WAS ONE OF PASSION--AND HAS BEEN REGRETTED EVER SINCE.
YOURS HOWEVER, WAS CALCULATED. PRIDEFUL. REMORSELESS.
NO. YOU'RE WRONG... YOU'RE LYING...
AM I? ARE YOU CLAIMING THAT YOU REGRET SAVING YOURSELF FROM NOVICE LOWTHER'S FURIOUS LUNGE?
UNCOMMON MAN, YOU HAVE AN UNCOMMON OPPORTUNITY.
OFFER YOUR STRENGTH TO ME.
YOUR LIFE IS OVER, YOUR MISSION OF TERROR AND VENGEANCE IS PASSED. GRANT ME YOUR STRENGTH. I SHALL USE IT FOR A FINER PURPOSE.
I WILL AGAIN PURSUE KNOWLEDGE, BUT I HAVE NO THIRST FOR UNIVERSAL TRUTHS. MY SUBJECT OF STUDY WILL BE MAN.
NOT... CAN'T...
WON'T BE DEAD.
FOOL.

This place--this house.
It's killing me. Draining me.
Got to get out. Catch my breath.
Outside--free--
KSHHH
I'll be fine.
FOOL.


Just fine.
Dying.
Escaped that house-- that creature--
But it wasn't enough.
He's still there. Standing in the window. Waiting for me.
But if he really can see all, what-- what--
WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?
Waiting...

DO NOT PRESUME TO MOCK WHAT YOU CAN NEVER UNDERSTAND. I FEAR NOTHING I SEE.
RETURN HERE AT ONCE! YOU CANNOT FLEE-- WITH EVERY BREATH, I GAIN YOUR STRENGTH.
THEN...COME OUT...
OF THE HOUSE...
DEAD MAN, EVEN NOW I FEEL YOUR BLOOD PULSE IN MY FINGERTIPS. NOTHING MAY BAR THE WAY!
YOU WILL GIVE ME WHAT I ASK!
MY MISSION WILL BEGIN WHERE YOURS ENDS!
I WILL BE THE SERVER OF JUSTICE! I WILL LOOK INTO MEN'S HEARTS!
WHOK
IT WILL BE I WHO DECIDES WHO WILL LIVE--
--AND WHO WILL DIE!

WHY SHOULD I NOT LIVE AGAIN? I WHO TORE THE BLINDERS FROM MY EYES AS NO MAN HAS EVER DONE?!
MY CRIME WAS GREAT-- BUT NO GREATER THAN YOURS, HERO! IT IS NOT I WHO SHOULD FEAR MY DEATH!
DON'T...
DON'T TALK TO ME...
...ABOUT DEATH...

... ABOUT FEAR...
SUK
YOU SHOULD NEVER USE TOOLS YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.
IT'S WHY YOU BUILT THIS HAVEN, DROOD.
KRAK
THOK
WHY YOU'VE BEEN HIDING HERE ON THIS THRESHOLD BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.
WHY YOUR SOULLESS SHADE HAUNTS THIS FORGOTTEN NIGHTMARE.
NOBODY WANTS TO DIE, DROOD, BECAUSE THEY FEAR THE UNKNOWN.
BUT NOT YOU.
NO.

YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU'RE IN FOR.
NOOOOO

-gasp-
The mausoleum. Drood... the mansion... all a hallucination?
Bleeding. All a fever dream. And now...
WHAM
...what's happening now?
Bleeding. All a fever dream. Lowther nearly killed me.
Lowther. Lowther was real. Could anything other than his madness have drawn him--
--here?

BOOM

Bleeding.
All a fever dream.

Over. Bleeding stopped. But not the dream.
Nightmare, really.
I keep hearing Drood, talking about remorse over his wife's death, talking about me. Me and--
Lowther. Not convinced I could have saved him. But if I could have... would I?
It haunts me. The nightmare...
...created by the insane mutterings of a serial killer and my own guilt over his death.
...or so I hope.
And though the records provide the address of a Drood carriage house...
1659 BRADBURY PLACE
Should I investigate? Even if I discovered proof of a 100-year-old murder beneath its rotting floors, what else might that house bring to light?
There are newer, more urgent crimes to be dealt with...
...and some mysteries that are better left unsolved.

story and pictures MIKE MIGNOLA
story and words DAN RASPLER
lettering WILLIE SCHUBERT
coloring MARK CHIARELLO
editing ARCHIE GOODWIN & BILL KAPLAN
BATMAN created by BOB KANE

collections featuring

The Dark Knight

BATMAN: SHAMAN
(W) Dennis O'Neil
(A) Edward Hannigan/John Beatty

BATMAN: PREY
(W) Doug Moench
(A) Paul Gulacy/Terry Austin

BATMAN: VENOM
(W) Dennis O'Neil
(A) Trevor Von Eeden/various

BATMAN: FACES
(W/A) Matt Wagner

BATMAN: COLLECTED LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT
(W) James Robinson/various
(A) Tim Sale/various

BATMAN VS. PREDATOR: THE COLLECTED EDITION
(W) Dave Gibbons
(A) Andy Kubert/Adam Kubert

BATMAN: KNIGHTFALL Part 1: BROKEN BAT
Various writers and artists

BATMAN: KNIGHTFALL Part 2: WHO RULES THE NIGHT
Various writers and artists

BATMAN: KNIGHTSEND
Various writers and artists

BATMAN: THE LAST ARKHAM
(W) Alan Grant (A) Norm Breyfogle

BATMAN: SWORD OF AZRAEL
(W) Dennis O'Neil
(A) Joe Quesada/Kevin Nowlan

BATMAN: TALES OF THE DEMON
(W) Dennis O'Neil (A) Neal Adams/various

BATMAN: YEAR ONE
(W) Frank Miller (A) David Mazzucchelli

BATMAN VS. PREDATOR II: BLOODMATCH
(W) Doug Moench
(A) Paul Gulacy/Terry Austin

BATMAN: A DEATH IN THE FAMILY
(W) Jim Starlin
(A) Jim Aparo/Mike DeCarlo

BATMAN: A LONELY PLACE OF DYING
(W) Marv Wolfman
(A) George Pérez/various

BATMAN: BLIND JUSTICE
(W) Samm Hamm
(A) Denys Cowan/Dick Giordano

BATMAN: THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS
(W) Frank Miller
(A) Frank Miller/Lynn Varley/Klaus Janson

BATMAN: FEATURING TWO-FACE AND THE RIDDLER
(W) B. Kane/Bill Finger/various
(A) various

BATMAN: YEAR TWO
(W) Mike W. Barr
(A) Alan Davis/Todd McFarlane/various

LEGENDS OF THE WORLD'S FINEST
(W) Walt Simonson (A) Dan Brereton

ROBIN: A HERO REBORN
(W) Chuck Dixon (A) Tom Lyle/Bob Smith

WORLD'S FINEST
(W) Dave Gibbons
(A) Steve Rude/Karl Kesel